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© SIMON CUDBY/KTM IMAGES

# COMMENT

The Monster Energy Arenacross Tour powered by Ford Ranger kicked off in Manchester at the start of the year and in all honesty I was really impressed with it all. I'm mostly interested in the quality of racing these days and I definitely wasn't left wanting on that front as the strongest Arenacross line-up ever assembled went hard at it all night.

If I'm honest I can't really knock any other part of the show either as it's a professionally put together production that the UK totally needed to put indoor racing back in a positive light after years and years of neglect. That's not to say I didn't appreciate what the FWSX team did at the time but now it's pretty obvious that it could all have been so much better.

Now in its fourth year I feel that the Arenacross series really hits the spot with a hardcore audience but also casual observers that come to see what all this dirt bike madness is about after seeing the TV ads or stumbling across one of the many pre tour demos and promotional events the e22 Sports team tirelessly deliver to the masses.

Of those new visitors to the Arenacross championship I would imagine that the majority must think that dirt bike racing is a professional sport that pays its athletes millions and millions of pounds. While that might be true of the AMA elite – although not even that cash cow is as fat as it once was – the same can't really be said of the guys who are banging bars in UK arenas.

Sure, the riders can make some money but nobody's gonna be retiring to sunny climes any time soon and even on a good day they're probably only taking home what any quality tradesman could earn with a fraction of the risk. That's not a dig at the Arenacross promoters by the way because believe me their prize fund is as good if not better than anything else this little island has to offer.

The trouble is the sport itself doesn't seem to be big enough to sustain the elite and the majority of race series and race teams are now only viable thanks to the help of sponsorship monies from enlightened corporations or wealthy enthusiasts – sometimes both – which is a far cry from how things were back in the day as Rob Hooper highlights in our exclusive interview that starts on page 92.

Without these supporters the professional side of the sport would be struggling somewhat so it's worth remembering to support those who support the athletes we love and aspire to be like. And if that means using quality products like WD-40, drinking Monster Energy and driving a Ford Ranger while filming our every move with a TomTom Bandit action camera then I don't necessarily see that as a bad thing...

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# TONY CAIROLI



## A NEW YEAR MESSAGE FROM THE EIGHT-TIME WORLD CHAMPION . . .

**H**ey folks, finally it's Christmas time, or should I say, it was Christmas time! How was yours? I went down to Sicily to celebrate with my family, it's always nice to spend time with your loved ones and even more so if you don't get to spend time with them every day. I love my country and I love my family but with my work it's always hard to find time to go there.

Anyway, first of all I want to wish you a Happy New Year! I hope that it will be a fantastic year for everyone and that you'll be able to reach all the new goals that you're looking to set for yourselves. The beginning of a new year offers us all a good opportunity to challenge ourselves with the target of being better people and to make our lives more satisfying.

I always write a list of what my year's goals are, for example in 2016 you could decide to finally get out every now and then for a little run or a bicycle ride, just to get a little fitter and to lose those extra pounds that have been haunting you. You could decide to save some money every month in order to buy that bike that you've been dreaming about for so long. Everyone should have some dreams to follow and this is the perfect time to decide which one you want to make a reality this year. Of course, as I said, I also have some and it's been a long time since I started on the long road to achieving mine!

2016 will be an amazing year for motocross. The level of the MXGP championship is growing every season and with the new riders coming up from MX2 I think it will be the most

competitive championship ever.

There are many riders in with a shot at the 2016 MXGP title – Febvre, Desalle, Paulin and many more including me of course! I see there being at least 10 riders who could win a GP and it's going to be amazing following the races to see how things pan out throughout the season.

I'm already riding and training with my new team-mate, Glenn Coldenhoff, and we are testing with our KTM 450 SX-Fs to make sure we are on point for the first race of the year in January at Sardinia's Internazionali d'Italia MX in Alghero which is a brand new track. Last year it was not easy to jump on a new bike but this year we've had the time to make sure our weapon is pretty sharp for the big challenge that is waiting for us!!.

How did you spend your last day of the year? Our New Year was really different from usual because we were invited to Matteo Bonini's wedding. The fact that Matteo and Giulia decided to get married on December 31 was unusual but also so funny! It was a special day for them and we all had a lot of fun!

Alessandro Lupino and I were the wedding witnesses for Matteo and it was cool to spend the last night of the year all together. It was a kind of flashback because Matteo, Alessandro and I we were in the same team from 2006 to 2009. Matteo arrived in 2006 and we were alone in the team, competing in MX2, until Alessandro joined the team in 2007, racing with me until 2009. We were young wild and free and we had so much fun together! I usually have good relationships with my team mates, I like to train together and to play soccer or go fishing with

them but with those two something special has born and we try to see each other as much as possible spending our free time together even though we all now race for different teams.

Now it's time to restart our engines and put some laps in! This part of the preparation is so important and you can't ignore anything – not even the smallest detail if you want to be perfectly ready for when the gate drops for the first time of the year. Every rider is doing their best to beat the rest of the field and all the motocross riders are all really professional today, no one fails to go running or cycling, to put in laps and to work on his suspension to find better settings for the upcoming season. So, do your best and this year will be better than the last, with sacrifice, dedication and passion any target is achievable, just be aware of black cats and walking under ladders and the inevitable bad luck they could bring!

I hope 2016 will be a special year for all of you, have fun folks and always enjoy your time!

Buon anno amici inglesi, a presto (Happy New Year my British friends, see you soon)!



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# BRYAN

# MACKENZIE



## A LITTLE APPRECIATION FOR THE TROUBLE AND STRIFE . . .

These past few months, particularly over the festive season, I've been able to stand back and really appreciate the role my wife plays in not only my life but my career. I know I just recently got married and you might roll your eyes thinking 'what a Jessie, he's still tripping on emotion' but you'd be wrong. I'm keeping this all above board and speaking from the perspective of having a very understanding – and even more supportive – motocross WAG as I don't want to get my moto-bro licence revoked from the bloke police. So I'm not getting soppy but speaking purely in terms of how invaluable a good lady is to any level of motocross rider.

We're not talking about your average lady here either. A motocross WAG has to be cut from a different cloth. One that's understanding, rational, selfless and patient. One that doesn't mind standing in the tail lights as often as in the headlights and will not take the huff when you head out riding with your buddies instead of going round the fams on the weekend or spend the night in the garage on the turbo bike or tinkering with your bike after work.

But when sh\*t goes south and you need to be patched back together, a sub for a new exhaust or lunch for the track she'll be right at the front of the queue to sponsor you.

Some people – mostly moto dads – believe that girlfriends are off-putting and as useful to a racer as a liquorice knee brace. And sometimes having a woman in a racer's life does have an adverse effect which I've seen a million times before.

Often is the case a young ripper comes of age and finds that his forearms aren't the only muscle that pumps rock hard and the testosterone ratio between wrist and Johnson might eventually favour the wrong end of the scale. Or sometimes the lady values her Friday night more than her fella's lifestyle commitment and when you don't go out on the sauce with

her because you're racing Sunday she does that thing they do when you've not done anything in particular wrong – like kill the cat or sleep with her best mate – but you wish you had so at least you would know what angle to put on your apology. That's the sh\*t kind. They are not moto-friendly.

But what I have is totally invaluable to me. I'm not sure I could go back to the days I had without my wife. She makes motocross easier.

We've had six years of good times and I couldn't possibly tell you all that she has done for the cause. But here are a few examples of why she's a keeper...

Financially the winter was tough. Basically, the bottom line was I wasn't earning. I hadn't been paid a wage to race motocross since the beginning of summer, my track hadn't been open in months because of bad weather and the last money I earned was for a 2-DNF-10 at FatCat on October 4.

I was also fully committed to a stag do, a wedding and a honeymoon in October and a thumb injury and busy training schedule in place starting in November meant the prospect of a job was slim if I wanted to have a good preparation for 2016. The light at the end of the tunnel was that my Apico Husqvarna contract was signed, sealed and delivered and I just had to ride out the storm for the rest of 2015 until my first team care package in January.

There were some bleak days but instead of getting on my case my good lady wife encouraged me to train hard, prepare the best I could and subsidised the shortfall on bills and even subbed me some cash for fuel and even lunch more than the odd occasion. And it's not the first time she's had to hold my hand and wipe my arse – metaphorically and literally. Through injury she has been my nurse, PA, TP technician, motivator and final decision maker.

My latest injury – which not many will know about – is a broken collarbone sustained riding

between Christmas and New Year. I was in a lot of pain with it and for over a week – even through New Year's night – she slept beside me on the couch because I had to sleep sat up as my collarbone didn't like me lying down. She did all of the paperwork and admin to get me an appointment at the hospital and organised the operation to plate my shoulder, too, with the drive of getting me back in the game ASAP because I've still got a lot of work to do before the season.

I've not driven one mile in over two weeks as I've been chauffeured around and she's come to the gym with me to work-out while I've sat on a spin bike.

And all of this is on top of the fact that she plans out my meals weekly, weighing out all the correct amounts of carbs, proteins and nutrients and packaging them in wee foil packets and on race day she puts a recovery drink in my hand and a plate of food on my lap as the sweat is still running off me after each race to refuel for the next.

And that's not to mention the time we have that isn't motocross orientated – haw-hee-haw-hee-haw.

So, you see, where would I be without her? She's important to me not only as my wife but as my man-friend.

PS I do actually do stuff for her too by the way. It's not all completely one-sided, even if it does sound that way...

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'BRYAN MACKENZIE' with the number '121' written below it.

# Imperial

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# DANIEL GROVE



## OUR OLDEST COLUMNIST RAMBLES ON ABOUT SOMETHING OR OTHER . . .

**H**appy New Year and all that but more importantly than that today is my 30th birthday! I hated turning 20 and now this! There ain't no stopping this pesky planet from spinning laps so I'll just have to pull a tear off and deal with it I guess...

Now that I've reached this milestone I can happily say – I guess I'm just having an emotional time so it's all coming out – that I don't have any real regrets when it comes to my motocross racing, a couple of daft one's away from it but whatever, I'm so old that I can't really remember what they were anyway...

Despite probably 90 per cent of racers out there aboard four-strokes, I've always raced and owned two-strokes for the main reasons known to everyone – cheap running costs, easy to maintain and just awesome fun to ride! I've no regrets about racing a two-stroke and I've certainly never left my bike in the van cause the track was 'muddy'.

You'll end up a much fast racer if you spend a year or two on a two-stroke and that's probably the best advice I can give anyone about riding motocross. That, and working on your technique instead of dropping your right elbow down past your knee around the local practice track – no one likes to see that.

I'm in no way making out that I'm some picture perfect motocrosser but ask anyone that can ride a bike fast and I'm sure they'd say something similar. I was told that when I was about 16 and I've always concentrated on that, even now. The better your technique the more energy you'll conserve meaning you'll go faster for longer. In fact I'd say that my style has improved drastically over the last three years or so... I never compliment myself so that can be my birthday present to myself.

I've never claimed to be a super trainer off of the bike but for the last five years all I've done for training is running and cycling. Not continuously as I'd be miles away by now but getting out running in the winter at night then clocking some miles on the roadie in the summer hasn't harmed me at all and my race results have steadily improved. You'll also save a few quid in gym membership although for the selfie generation among us that visit the gym to 'check in' on Facebook before hitting Nandos, you might need to keep that 'membership' going just so you can bore us to death with your hashtags...

I guess one regret, although it's not really a regret, is never coughing up for new gear every year like I maybe should have. Up until

last year I'd never had current gear except for a couple of seasons a long time ago – and they were presents from other people – as my main concern was making sure that my bike was up together and when you race regularly motocross can sometimes get expensive as I'm sure you're all well aware. So it's no biggie really and I see plenty of other racers running a similar set-up to me which I find cool, motocross racing is all about the results and to get a result, your bike has to finish the races. When I'm done with racing I'd love to help someone out that goes about their racing the same way that I do so send your résumé in but it may be a couple of years until I can help you out I'm afraid...

So it's still really weird that I now have a long-term test bike that I snuck into my van after the DBR Mega Test a couple of months ago and some new riding gear to go with it. I've always looked after my riding gear and even have some that's pretty old that's still in great condition...



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# JERK

# NICHOLLS



## YAK CHECKS IN FROM NEW ZEALAND WHERE DESPITE BEING 13 HOURS AHEAD HE STILL MANAGES TO GET HIS COLUMN IN LATER THAN EVERYONE ELSE...

**H**ello everyone! It seems like a long time since I last wrote in and I had to have a look in my word documents to see what I had chimed on about the last time. Luckily for you guys I won't go into long distance memories this time and instead I'll talk about my plans for the year.

It's taken a long time to sort out but I'll be riding a Husqvarna under what was the Revo Hitachi KTM UK team run by Roger Magee. I rode for Roger for three years in 2009, '10 and '11 and I feel it was where I established myself as a top GP rider. So rejoining the team after two tough years with injury feels right, to rebuild myself and my career and put myself firmly back into the front of the GP field.

Since the start of November I've been training physically ahead of 2016. I got a new program from a South African guy who is a cyclist but is heavily into motocross too. It's worked well so far and I can't say I've trained way harder than before but I'm training smarter and with more structure. As a racer sometimes our downfall is not knowing when enough is enough. I'm always willing to work that bit harder for my sport but sometimes it's not the right thing to do. Through technology nowadays he can keep an eye on my levels and how my body is coping with the training etc. By Christmas time I was ready to get back on a dirt bike.

But before all that was the big day for my new wife and I – we got married! I thought I would be nervous before getting married but I wasn't in the slightest which is a good thing I feel. We've been together for nine years so we were well and truly ready for it but also I had a lot of people say 'are you getting nervous yet?'. My answer was always no because why would I be nervous? Lining up for a race on a sketchy track or lining up for the first race of the year is something to be nervous about, not marrying your best friend.

The day went like a flash of light and before

you know it I was carrying my chainsaw that my mates bought me up to our room at the hotel for the night and that was a wrap. Two days later we got on a plane and flew to Helsinki in Finland, then on to another plane up to Lapland for our honeymoon. We both just fancied doing something different so this looked like a cool idea but it was pants!

We paid a fortune for this trip so were fully expecting to be staying in a real nice place and getting treated like royalty but a crappy hotel with average food and nothing much to do meant it wasn't what we were expecting. We still had a laugh though even if after one day we were looking at flights home.

Husky rides were the standout experience. We had a two man sled with one person standing and leaning/steering it while the other person sat in front. It was being pulled by six husky dogs going flat out through the snowy forests in -25 degree weather – it was pretty epic.

We did snowmobile rides too but they were so boring as you had to go slow. Blu got bored a couple times and stuck in some passes but all in all for what we paid for it was a crap holiday. It's a good job we both have a sense of humour and still had a laugh through it all. We were pumped to get home though!

Then it was Christmas. On Christmas Eve I had a bit of a ride day with all my mates at my track. The conditions were perfect so it was an awesome day. I resurrected my 2008 KTM125 that I bought off my mate a couple years ago and had some serious fun on it. I guess I'm gonna have to get some white plastics for her now!

Then a few days later we pretty much did the same thing but this time there was no wind so we could send the new jumps. I was trying to keep up with Lewis Tombs and EBB on my 125 which made for a laugh and a lot of heavy breathing. I managed to get all the jumps on the

old girl too.

That night I packed all my bags, and the next day Blu dropped me off at Heathrow and I set off for New Zealand. I haven't been here since the start of 2013 – my last good season – so I was determined to get back out here and put some hours in while chasing the locals. Plus I get to see my granddad too who lives about 40 minutes away from where Ben Townley lives which is where I'm staying.

I've ridden the new Husky three times over here now and absolutely love it. It's the first 450 I've been on since the first part of the 2014 season and man is it easier to ride than that bike. I've had to change the gearing as I guess they use US-spec bikes over here and it comes with 14-48 which is ridiculously tall for the euro style tracks they have over here.

Ben left yesterday for Europe but has left me his van and the keys to his workshop which is also where I'm living. His wife and kids are still here so it's a mint base for me to work from. I'm riding with Ben's sparring partner Cody Cooper amongst others – he is so fast over here and it's so strange how he can't make it happen in Europe. But most NZ riders are like that – I guess that's why there's only ever been a handful make it overseas. But either way it's good for me to chase them around on the mixed terrain they have over here.

I'm looking forward to coming back in February and hopefully I'll see you all then...



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Toby Price makes a huge splash at the Dakar Rally



## NEWS, NEWS AND NOTHING BUT THE NEWS . . .

Words by Ryan MacKenna

**T**he winter is a bleak period for the UK dirt biker. Dark mornings, early nights, dreary days and more often than not no stone spray sandwiches on the weekend.

Our off-road faith can often be questioned at this time but is restored by A) Christmas which spikes enthusiasm by bringing to you anything from anodised hardware to performance enhancing power parts and B) close-quarter indoor racing where the outcome is never a foregone conclusion.

The SuperEnduro world championship is a perfect race series to suppress the winter blues. It's designed to be unpredictable with a three race format that changes the riders' positions on the startline for each moto – adding extra spice to the already difficult course.

If the wide-open outcome alone isn't enough to get you logged on on a Sunday morning, Cumbrian Jonny Walker is battling for top honours every week. Factory Red Bull KTM rider Jonny has started the season on the podium with two second places at the opening

two rounds and sits just two points out of the series lead.

Of course, then there's the Monster Energy Arenacross Tour which started on New Year weekend in Manchester and runs until the end of February. Josh Hansen was the headline act as an experienced US supercross star, however, the French and Brit riders clearly didn't give a toss as Hansen could only muster an eighth while defending AX champ Thomas Ramette took the Main Event.

Top Brit Jack Brunell rounded out the podium in third while Frenchman Cedric Soubeyras shared the overall round win courtesy of first place in the head-to-head race and second in the Final.

Talking of Hansen, how did it happen that an active AMA SX racer opted for UK arenacross over US supercross? Simply, it was an argument over his #100. In America a rider can earn a 'career' number which they can keep every season for the rest of their career. To be eligible you must be a past champion or

earn enough points with combined SX and MX points in a season, milestones Josh Hansen has never achieved.

Instead he has always only requested the #100 for consecutive years and been granted it, building a brand around the number. But this year he was denied and given the number he had earned in '15 – #57. In protest Hansen decided he wasn't going to race in America.

Last season was a break-out year for Shaun Simpson, no doubt. Notching up achievements throughout 2015, he found just enough time at the arse end of the year to grab one more highlight. Shaun was voted by the people to star in a new off-road movie called 'Living for the Weekend – the Exceptional Six'.

The producers of the movie will follow Shaun and five others throughout the season, filming as they go, to make a sequel to their original 2013 hit movie. Fourth place MXGP, British champion and unofficial people's champion – no bad laddie!

I don't claim to know anything about the



*Smoldering* Shaun Simpson  
is set to be a big movie star

Dakar Rally but I do appreciate the sheer size and acclaim of the event. So the fact that the organisers of this year's event were forced to cancel the second day of competition due to the weather must have meant it was desperate. Apparently it was so bad that it swelled rivers along the course and grounded the helicopters that monitor the safety of the riders, forcing the day to be pulled.

There's new rubber on the market for consumers. If I was to get my facts totally straight I'd find it may not be completely new but is newly prominent thanks to a big push for '16.

Gibson Tyre Technology is an off-road specific company coming straight from UK shores. Designed, tested and owned in the UK, Gibson is serious about its move into the limelight with the big dawgs by recently agreeing a deal to supply the BUD Racing Kawasaki team its tyres for West Coast SX Lites, MXGP and European MX2 championships while jumping in bed with MRS Ltd to distribute

tyres in the UK.

When you think about Pro Circuit you think Kawasaki, fast bikes, champion riders, Monster Energy, Thor kit and amazing performance parts. While most of that will go unchanged, the Pro Circuit trademark of Thor racewear is no more.

Pro Circuit Kawasaki will now don Fox racing kit in a multi-year deal with its equally successful Californian neighbours. You will have noticed PC stopped wearing Thor helmets last year, opting for Bell Helmets instead, so perhaps the writing was on the wall then for the PC-Thor collab.

It was rumoured for months about the direction of the Hitachi Revo KTM team after losing star man Shaun Simpson for 2016. And although no official press release was made, word was officially leaked a couple of days before Christmas when Youthstream released a list of officially approved teams that showed Hitachi Construction HUSQVARNA and riders Jake Nicholls and Ben Watson. So the team

switch from orange to white/blue and trade Steve Turner, Jake Nicholls for Shaun Simpson while Ben Watson stays on the team in MX2.

The annual Hawkstone Park International is just around the corner – Feb 7 – signalling that the motocross season is just about to be awoken from a five-month hibernation. This year the famous international will be brought to you by Be Wiser Insurance company as title sponsor. Be Wiser is no stranger to two wheels as it also sponsors a BSB race team but it's awesome news that another top-flight outside-of-the-industry firm has seen the value of our beloved sport and decided to have a taste. So, on that note, let's support those that support us – see if Be Wiser can do anything for you at bewiser.co.uk.

The Hawky International marks the first professional outdoor race in the UK each season and is always a perfect platform for a pre-season shakedown. This year it's again boasting an impressive line-up that so far looks like this... **>>**

Jonny Walker is battling hard in the SuperEnduro series



## AIR CON?

CAN MAGNETS IN YOUR GOGGLES REALLY HELP YOU BE A FASTER RIDER? ASTERISK THINK SO...



Do you feel that your goggles pinch your nose and restrict you from breathing properly? Well, if you do, or you just struggle to suck enough oxygen up through your nozzle, then Asterisk have come up with just the thing to ease your pain – their all-new AC System. Basically it's a two part magnetic nasal dilation device that fits in your goggles with its purpose being to enhance your nasal breathing ability.

Available right now from dirty dealers who are part of the Madison network the AC System Kit comes with everything you need to get going – that's 1 x AC System goggle clip, 2 x adhesive steel nasal attachment stickers, 10 x alcohol wipes pads and 1 x magnetic sticker applicator – all for the price of £54.99. Get ahead of the game and order yours today because just like holeshot devices once everyone's got 'em the advantage is gone...





Chris Alldredge and the entire Pro Circuit Monster Energy Kawasaki team will be wearing Fox racewear this year



A Factory Yamaha ride has turned Chad Reed's frown upside down



## REED IT AND WEEP . . .

### CHAD SIGNS WITH FACTORY YAMAHA TEAM FOR FAREWELL SX TOUR . . .

Factory Husky MX2's Maximus Anstie, wee Tam Covington and Conrod Mewse and Factory KTM will be there with Jeff Herlings, Pauls Jonass and Dave Pootjes along with the Suzuki factory squad of Kev Strijbos, Ben Townley, Jez Seewer and Bas Vaessen. The home teams of newly named Wilvo Virus Performance KTM bring Simmo and Sterry while the Hitachi Construction Husky team of DBR columnist Jake Nicholls and Ben Watson is going and reigning Maxxis British MX2 champion Steven Lenoir makes his MX1 debut.

KTM and Husky have announced a recall on their 2016 model adult motocross bikes. The issue lies in the spokes of the front wheel where variations in the manufacturing process has forced them to be replaced where necessary.

If you have bought any of the following '16 models from KTM or Husky then get in touch with your local dealer to arrange an appointment – 125 SX, 150 SX, 250 SX, 250

SX-F, 350 SX-F and 450 SX-F and Husky TC 125, TC 250, FC 250, FC 350 and FC 450.

Downtown Mike Brown was an early casualty of the new season's AXUK tour. The former AMA 125cc Nats champ broke his fibula in a crash at round one in Manchester and is sceptical that he will make it back onto the track before the end of the series. Did you know Brownie will be 44 years old this year? Just take it easy Mike...

After already banning tear-offs at all of its enduro events in 2015, the ACU has u-turned on the proposed compulsory ban of tear-offs at all ACU-sanctioned motocross events for 2016 but it's still on the cards for 2017 onwards. After a meeting with industry folk, the ban which was to stop littering of farmland is now at the discretion of the individual landowner or organiser of each event.

Current European MX2 champion Nick Kouwenberg is surprisingly setting his sights on the 250SX West Coast supercross series this year with support from Honda before >>

One of America's most favourite Australians since Crocodile Dundee – that's Chad Reed in case you were struggling to figure it out – finally announced that he'd managed to secure a Factory Yamaha ride just days before the AMA Supercross series season opener. While that's probably not too much of a shock to many pit pundits out there the fact that Chad cracked a smile during a PR shoot most definitely is.

"He actually didn't want to do any serious shots," claims astonished US photographer Steve Cox who supplied the official images for the breaking story. "He actually seemed happy," he added looking a little freaked out by the whole deal.

Whether a happy Chad Reed is still a fast Chad Reed remains to be seen but with Anaheim under a good few inches of water as DBR went to press absolutely anything could happen at round one...

Max Anstie be hoping to send Jeffrey Herlings a strong message at the Hawkstone International



returning home to start the defence of his EMX250 crown in Valkenswaard at the end of March. It may have been a surprise to see his name on the Anaheim start list but it's not too unfamiliar ground for the Dutchman as he has already won the European Supercross Lites title at EICMA this year to add to his motocross achievements. Watch this space.

The Maxxis British championship once again picked out its favourite venue from last season's series to present with the Organiser of the Year title. With eight organisers/tracks to choose from Canada Heights eventually got the nod. The Sidcup and DMCC team put in a mega effort last year with a complete revamp of the track to motivate riders and fans alike. Along with its usual effort of prep and enthusiasm, the ACU felt it was the stand-out organiser from 2015 and set the bar for next year's organisers.

Jeffrey Perrett likes to keep himself busy. When he's not running the successful Team Green Kawasaki race team or commentating here, there and everywhere he's organising a race series! Yup, Jeff's in the middle of co-organising a summer MX series at Rocketworld with owner Chris 'Rocket' Rose and Julie Coyne who was an integral part of the team that laid on the 2004 Isle of Wight GP.

Scheduled to run mid-week throughout the summer holidays, it shouldn't interfere with any other championships in the area and is pencilled to have classes for all levels of rider with, I'm assured, 'lots of other cool stuff, too'.

Martin Barr was a surprise signing to Buildbase Honda in the dying stages of 2015 and moves to MX2. Barty Marr had previously turned down an offer for next season from Dave Thorpe's outfit earlier in the year to be able to

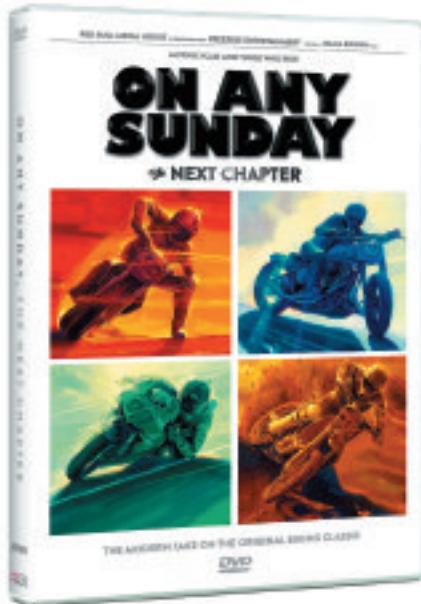
continue with his own BRT KTM team. But he told of how a last-minute call from KTM shot his hopes of another season running his own 350 SX-F down and left him with only one option, to see if the Buildbase Honda ride was still available. Clearly it was and Barty is the fourth man in the Buildbase Honda UK roster.

Gautier Paulin is undoubtedly one of the most talented riders on a bike behind a GP startline but has yet to realise his potential with a crown. This year Paulin has joined undoubtedly the strongest rider/trainer alliance in the world by joining the Aldon Baker programme and basing himself pre-season out in Florida.

Working with Baker and great riders and champions like Dungey, Musquin and Anderson, Paulin might just raise his level to finally fulfil his champion pedigree this coming season...



# WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN!



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REDBULL  
SPACE SOUVENIR



Red Bull Media  
House



REDBULL MEDIA HOUSE  
PHONE CASE

ON ANY SUNDAY  
THE NEXT CHAPTER  
SPECIAL EDITION  
MULTI-FORMAT



REDBULL MEDIA HOUSE  
TRAVEL BAG &  
BASEBALL CAP



REDBULL MEDIA HOUSE  
NOTEBOOK &  
T-SHIRT



SPARK MODEL  
REDBULL MEDIA HOUSE  
DANIEL RICCIARDO  
INFINITY RACING CAR

**DIRTBike**  
RIDER  
COMPETITION

ON ANY SUNDAY: THE NEXT CHAPTER DVD PLUS  
SOME PUKKA RED BULL MEDIA HOUSE SWAG

Which Red Bull athlete stars in the FMX segment of the film?

Is it:

- A) Travis Pastrana
- B) Travis Peperami
- C) Travis Perkins
- D) Sue Perkins

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

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# WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN!

## ON ANY SUNDAY: THE NEXT CHAPTER DVD PLUS SOME PUKKA RED BULL MEDIA HOUSE SWAG

If you've never seen old-school motorcycle movie *On Any Sunday* then you've really missed out so put down this magazine, get yourself on YouTube and find a 'full version' to watch right now. When you've done that – or if you're already a fan of the classic film by Bruce Brown that starred Steve McQueen and know exactly what we're on about – then you can read on...

That movie basically changed the way the world looked at motorcycles and now more than 40 years – and many films later – the Brown family are at it again. This time it's Dana Brown – son of the legendary director – who takes the ground breaking documentary one step further.

This is the next chapter and chronicles the international world of motorcycle riding through the eyes of today's greatest racers. Starring legends Travis Pastrana, Robbie Maddison, Marc Marquez and Dani Pedrosa the movie brings the best action from the sports of enduro, motocross, FMX, speedway and MotoGP direct to your TV.

To celebrate the UK release of the DVD and Blu Ray on January 25 we've hooked up with the good guys at 101 Films ([www.101-films.com](http://www.101-films.com)) to offer each and every DBR reader the opportunity to win a copy of the movie plus an immense pile of Red Bull Media House swag that includes –

- **On Any Sunday: The Next Chapter DVD**
- **Red Bull Media House travel bag**
- **Red Bull Media House baseball cap**
- **Red Bull Media House t-shirt**
- **Red Bull Media House notebook**
- **Spark Model Red Bull Media House Daniel Ricciardo Infiniti F1 car**

And possibly the coolest thing we've ever given away in DBR – an actual piece of the helium balloon that lifted Felix Baumgartner into the stratosphere for the record breaking Red Bull Stratos jump. Bonkers.

To win this prize of much epicness you need to answer the question below then fill in the coupon below, cut it out and send it to us at DBR Magazine, 41 Northgate, White Lund Industrial Estate, Morecambe, Lancashire, LA4 5EF before the closing date of high noon on February 12. After that you can sit back and relax safe in the knowledge that you're one step closer to winning an amazing pile of Red Bull Media House swag and the hottest DVD to hit shops this spring.

# FIRST TIME

10

NEWBIE



FROM THIS DAY ON  
- YOU'LL ALWAYS CARRY  
ME ON YOUR BACK

YOU'RE  
SHITTIN'  
ME.



SORRY  
BUT  
NOW I  
HAVE TO  
KICK  
YOU.

FIRST  
RIDE

WHAT  
THE?!



OKAY. HERE  
GOES NOTHIN'!

FIRST  
OFFROAD

WHY ARE  
WE LEAVING A PERFECTLY  
GOOD HIGHWAY?!



FIRST HILLCLIMB

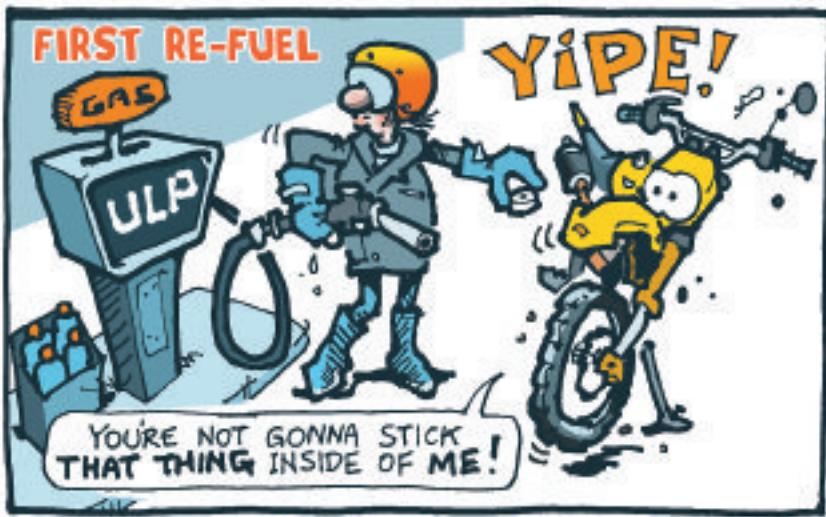
GASP!  
GRACK!  
WHY  
DON'T YOU  
GET OFF  
AND PUSH,  
YOU LAZY  
SOD!

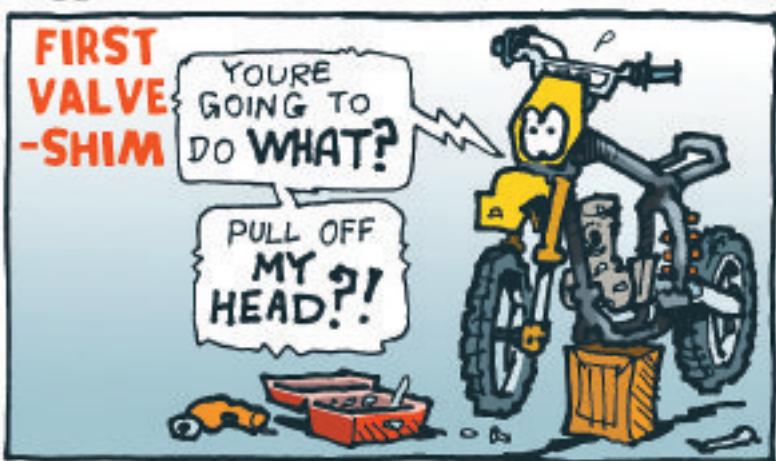
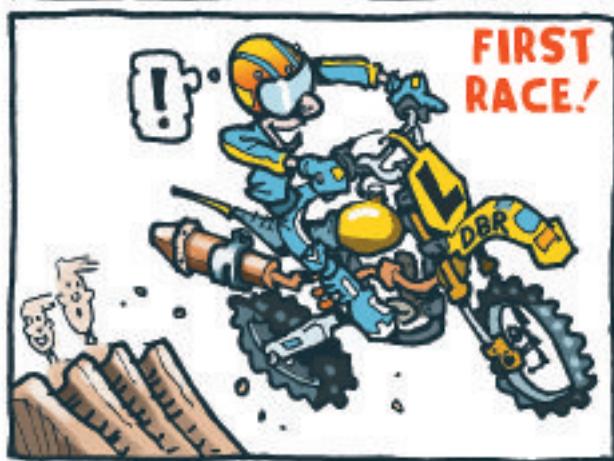
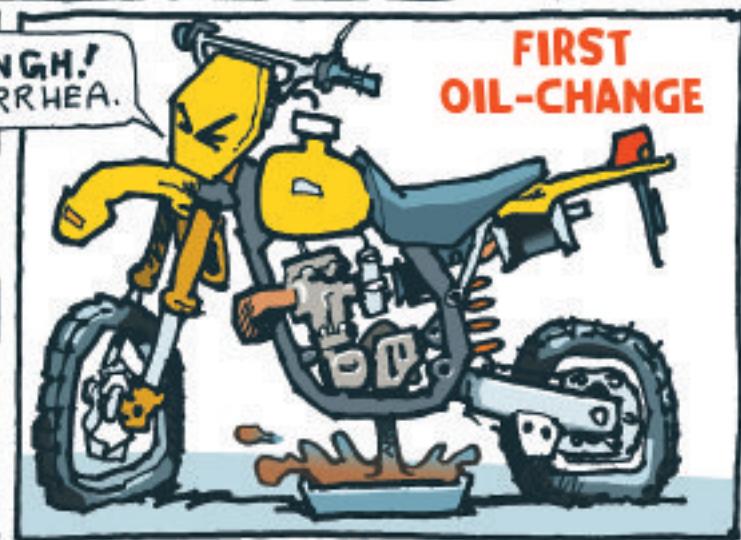
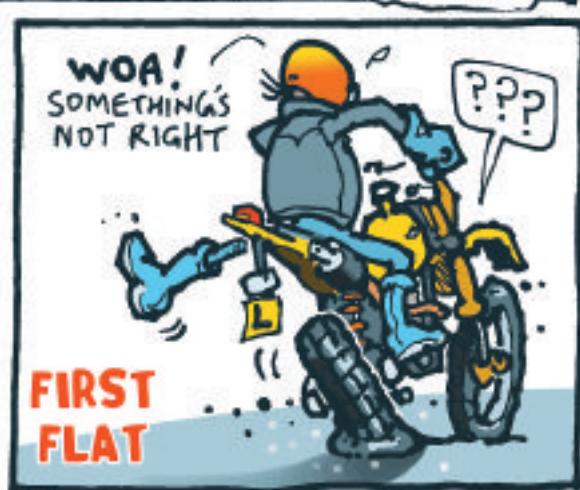
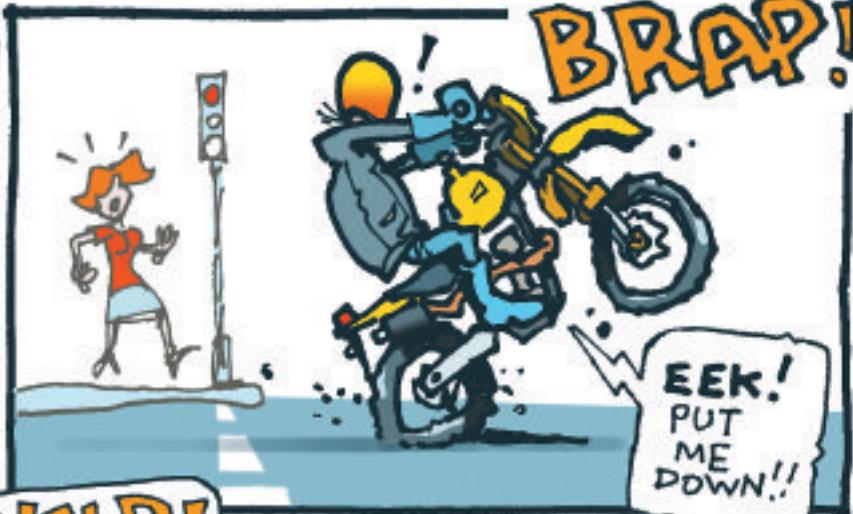
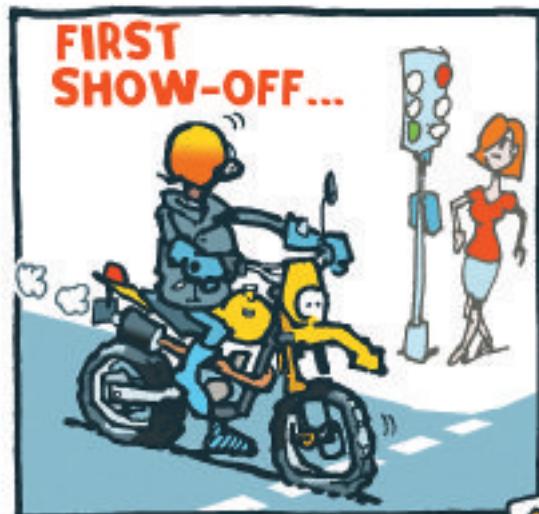


FIRST RE-FUEL

YIPE!

YOU'RE NOT GONNA STICK  
THAT THING INSIDE OF ME!







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MONSTER  
ENERGY



# NIGHT!

The 2016 Monster Energy Arenacross Tour gets off to a great start in Manchester . . .

Words and photos by **Sutty**

MANCHESTER  
2016  
MANCHESTER  
2016  
MANCHESTER  
2016



There's absolutely no point in beating about the bush – the opening round of this year's Monster Energy Arenacross Tour powered by Ford Ranger was frickin' epic and if that's the kind of action we can expect to see over the next 10 rounds then we're in for a fairly awesome few months.

The quality of the show has never been in question and I can't think of another European event that even comes close to delivering the overall experience that Arenacross does. From the moment the lights go out and the lasers fire up, to the final flourish as the top three finishers are showered with strips of golden foil ribbon, there's never a dull moment in the tightly orchestrated production.

There's one thing that event promoters e22 Sports can't strictly control though and that's the racing. Okay, they can carefully pick who lines up and ensure the track is designed to encourage close competition but when the gate drops it's totally in the hands of the racers. Fortunately it seems as though those two key steps were carried out with due diligence because the action that unfolded at round one was nothing short of outstanding.

For 2016 course construction has been taken over by Justin Barclay of JB Tracks and he absolutely nailed it in Manchester with a layout that allowed riders to use plenty of different lines and rhythms while still retaining enough room for the racers to actually race. It probably helped that the killer whoops weren't too killer either what with it being the first race of the year and all.

The entry list is the best it's been too with more big names on it than ever before. Top of the list and rocking the big fat #1 plate is defending champion Thomas Ramette. He's joined on the SR75 Molson Suzuki squad by Cyrille Coulon.

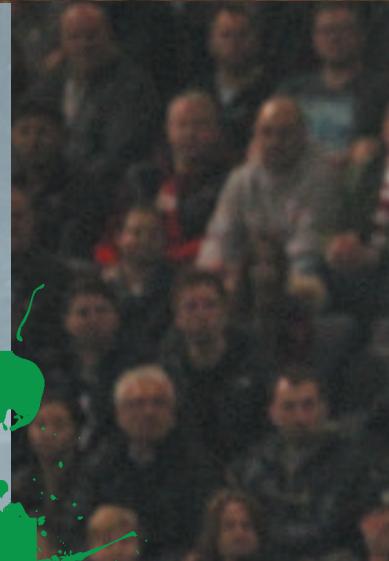
Inaugural Arenacross tour champion Adam Chatfield returns for Buildbase Honda with Angelo Pellegrini as team-mate while 2014 champ Fabien Izoird and last year's series runner-up Florent Richier ride for LPE Kawasaki. Steve James also has a second team running under the SJR banner (that's Steve James Racing in case you were wondering) – Jack Brunell and US hotshot Josh Hansen headline that one.

The iconic Husqvarna brand is represented by no fewer than six riders. Mike Brown and Gracie Featherstone run in XBladez colours while MVR-D have Harri Kullas and Aussie badass Daniel McCoy. Revo Hitachi also switch to Husky power but bring familiar faces Jordan Booker and James Dunn with them.

Rob Hooper's Geartec Yamaha squad has two rookies on board – Aussie Jake Vella and another fast Frenchman Cedric Soubeyras. ShockTech Honda meanwhile employs Welsh boys Ashley Greedy and Shane Carless and then last but by no means least are the Bayliss brothers – Matt and Chris – who form the Wooldridge Demolition Honda squad.

As I said, that is without doubt the most impressive Arenacross line-up ever assembled which bodes well for the full tour.

Rather than offer up a blow-by-blow account of what went down at the season opener we figured it'd be more fun to run through the full list of pro racers and give a brutally honest review of their performance on the night. Here goes...



## Cedric Soubeyras

Geartec Yamaha

Arenacross rookie Cedric Soubeyras needed little time to find his feet and after winning the head-to-heads and finishing second in the main on his Geartec Yamaha sits joint first in the series rankings alongside Ramette. Super stylish and oh-so fast I'd expect Soubeyras to challenge for the title if he can keep his head...

# Thomas Ramette

## SR75 Molson Suzuki

The #1 plate has proved to be really heavy in the past but it didn't slow Thomas Ramette down one bit. Fastest in qualifying and winner of heat one, Thomas transferred to the main with ease thanks to a ride through the pack to third in his second heat. The Frenchman placed third in the head-to-head portion of proceedings but then absolutely dominated the 14-lap final with a flawless start-to-finish victory despite being slowed by backmarkers in the final few laps. An awesome start to the series for the defending champ...



## Jack Brunell

### SJR Kawasaki

Brunell entered Manchester a little under the radar but immediately made his intentions clear in the qualifying sessions showing awesome amounts of speed. Jack carried that form into the night show running 2-6 in his heats to transfer directly to the main. In the final Jack got off to an awesome start and ran second behind Ramette in the early running before coming under pressure from a French freight train. While Soubeyras squeezed through, Brunell was able to keep Izord at bay to claim the third and final spot on the podium.



## Cyrille Coulon

### SR75 Molson Suzuki

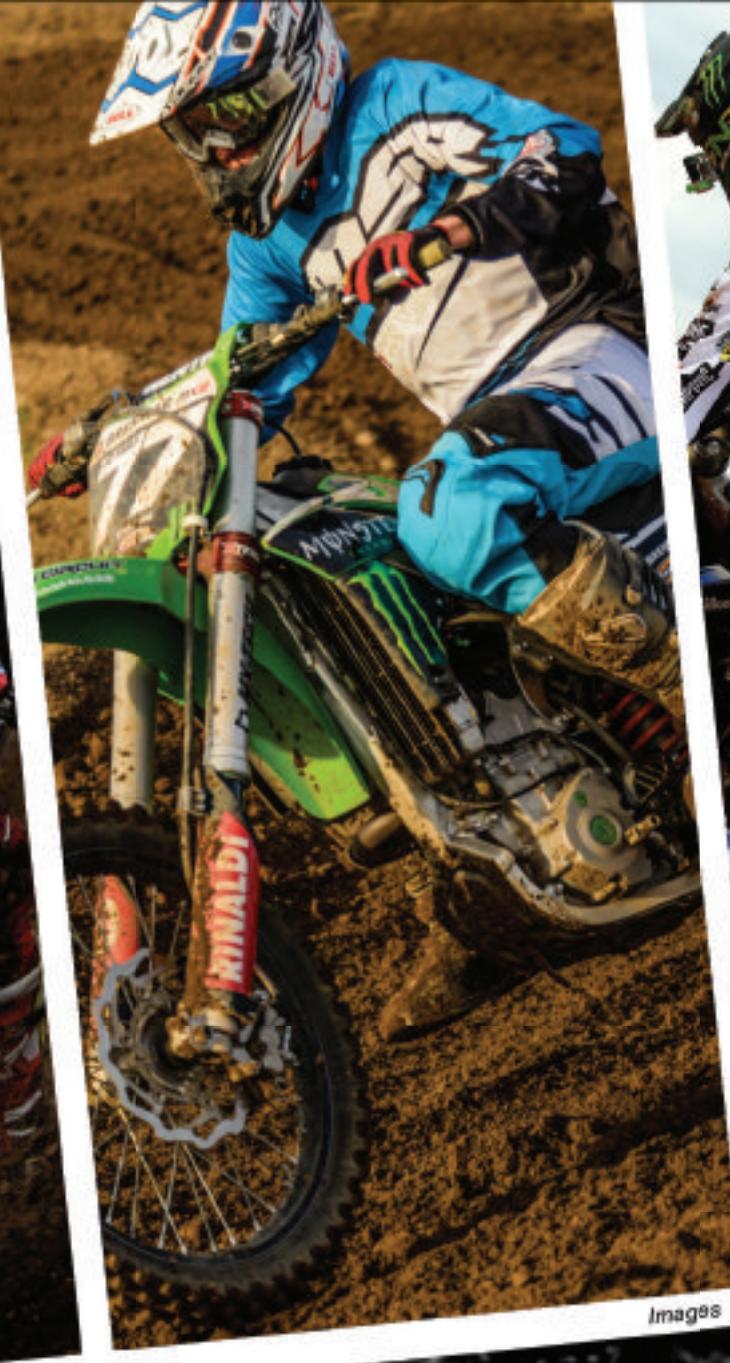
Aaahhh Cyrille! It was a surprise to see the laidback Frenchie in the LCQ and had he not strolled by the SR75 Molson Suzuki team pits just at the right time wouldn't have made the start of the LCQ let alone the final. Still, he took advantage of some argy-bargy ahead of him in the latter stages of the LCQ to snatch the last transfer spot. After a cracking start in the main Cyrille somehow got snarled up in somebody else's crash and had to charge through the pack from the very back. Very creative and oh-so patient, Coulon made it through to fifth without ramming, hitting or pulling questionable moves on anyone along the way. Good work Cyrille!

## Fabien Izoird

LPE Kawasaki

Fabien was not amused to be taken out by Matt Bayliss in their head-to-head and it was apparently handbags at dawn in the pits afterwards. To be fair the move he pulled on Matt in the last turn of their second heat was equally as bad if not worse. Whether those incidents with the young Brit messed with Fabien's mind or not remains unknown but regardless the Frenchman had a relatively steady, workmanlike ride through the pack in the final to finish fourth. Brutally fast and a proven winner I expect Fabien will up the tempo in Glasgow and beyond.

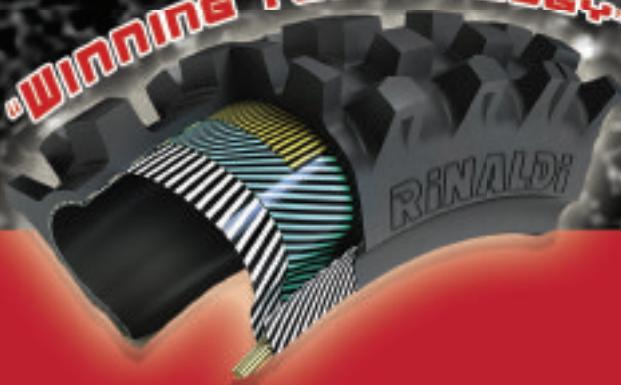




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# Josh Hansen

SJR Kawasaki

Had Hannay not gone down in turn two of the main event we may have seen an epic scrap for the win between himself and Ramette as both can be fairly aggressive on the bike when it counts. Unfortunately we never got to see that unfold and we'll have to wait to see how it might have panned out. As well as bringing a lot of star quality to the series, Hansen is a bona fide title contender. The rumour is he was feeling a little under the weather in Manchester after hitting it hard on New Year's Eve. It might just be that we see a faster and sharper Hansen at rounds two and beyond which is quite a scary thought for his opposition.



# Adam Chatfield

Buildbase Honda

A relatively quiet night for Adam Chatfield netted him a sixth place finish which will do him just fine as he understands the importance of putting in consistent results all season long. Almost invisible at times Adam plugged away all night and reaped a decent result at the end of it all. With a long series ahead Chatfield has to be considered a title challenger even if he keeps things quite steady.



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## Florent Richier

LPE Kawasaki

Bad times in qualifying for the 2015 runner-up would have meant nil points for Richier had Matt Bates not put him in the main event as promoter's choice which is perfectly legit under Arenacross rules. Florent grasped the opportunity with both hands and rode to a steady seventh place finish from a second row start. Top work mon ami!

## Matt Bayliss

Wooldridge Demolition Honda

Yes! Yes! Yes! I've been a fan of the Bayliss brothers' indoor prowess for some years now so it was nice to see the eldest of the two turn that promise into solid results in Manchester. After taking a popular win in heat three Matt pumped the crowd up by disposing of Fabien Izoird to win their head-to-head battle. An off-track excursion in the main resulted in a ninth place finish but already he's being referred to as the people's champ. The Arenacross tour has created a new British hero and that's just awesome...

## Angelo Pellegrini

Buildbase Honda

We didn't get to see the best of Angelo Pellegrini in Manchester after he tangled with Hansen in turn two and had to start from the very back of the pack. A 10th place finish isn't a fair reflection of Pellegrini's pace or prowess. Expect to see better in upcoming rounds.



## Gradie Featherstone

XBladez Husqvarna

Manchester Arenacross fans will no doubt remember Gradie Featherstone for winning the Rookies class last year with duct tape numbers on his bike. Well, after moving up to the Pro class, and upgrading his numbers n'all Gradie was a winner once again – albeit in the LCQ. One of only two riders able to get down the first rhythm section in two leaps – Hansen was the other – Gradie was running well in the main until getting taken out by Hansen midrace. Remounting just in front of the leaders the #9 made a bit of a menace of himself – some blue flags may have been needed here – before he crashed hard after landing on a tuff block. Still, it was a really strong ride for the 18-year-old Yorkshire lad who hopefully isn't too detuned by the huge get-off.

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## The others!

The guys who for one reason or another didn't make it to the main event...

### Chris Bayliss Woolbridge Demolition Honda

Finishing third in the LCQ is as useful as finishing 12th as Chris Bayliss found out in Manchester. Bayliss was actually very unlucky not to make the cut and had it not been for a hard charging Coulon would have made it through to the points payer. Still, a cracking start to the season for the #259 who'll be looking to make amends in Glasgow and join big brother Matt in the main event.

### Jordan Booker Revo Hitachi Husqvarna

A desperate last lap move by Matt Bayliss pushed Jordan Booker out of the final qualifying spot in the LCQ which meant he ended up watching the main event from the stands instead of racing in it. On the pace from the off Booker should bounce back quite quickly...

### Daniel McCoy MVR-D Husqvarna

The aggressive Aussie who finished the 2014 tour as runner-up is back for 2016 but gets off to a disappointingly slow start in Manchester. The speed is definitely there but bad starts and tough competition translate into poor finishes through the qualifiers and fifth place in the LCQ just simply isn't good enough.

### Jake Vella Geartec Yamaha

I don't know too much about Jake Vella although the timing sheets show he struggled for pace in Manchester. Cedric Soubeyras proved it's definitely not the bike so the pressure's now on the young Aussie to get a result. If anything it looked like Jake was maybe trying a little too hard in Manchester so let's hope he settles down sooner rather than later and shows us what he's really capable of.

### Shane Carless Shocktech Honda

Shane Carless isn't someone you'd automatically think of as an indoor ace but after seeing him handle the track well in Manchester it's clear he definitely has the pace to run in an Arenacross main event. If there's one place the Welshman seemed to struggle it's in the whoops but speed there will come with increased confidence.

### Harri Kullas MVR-D Husqvarna

After a stellar year in 2015 – both at Arenacross and in the GP series – it was a surprise to see Harri Kullas watching the Manchester main from the stands after failing to transfer from either the heats or the LCQ. Kullas seemed to be doing everything right out on the track and had plenty of speed but I guess sometimes it's just not your night...

### James Dunn Revo Hitachi Husqvarna

Another rider who didn't seem to be doing too much wrong but found himself at the wrong end of the results sheet was James Dunn. With competition through the pack so close I expect James' results and confidence will improve as he settles into the series.

### Ashley Greedy Shocktech Honda

Ashley Greedy seemed to be on his very best behaviour in Manchester and the usual trail of destruction that follows in his wake – broken bikes, bodies, tuff blocks, arena walls etc – was conspicuous in its absence. That's not necessarily a bad thing of course and I hope it's a trend he follows throughout the rest of the championship.

### Mike Brown XBladez Husqvarna

When Brownie rocked up for round one rumours were running rife that he had a jacked up wrist and the lack of speed he showed in qualifying would seem to back that up. Things were to get a lot worse for the amiable American though as a second corner tangle in his second heat left the #3 racer with a cracked fibula. It's doubtful Brownie will make a return before the end of the series but Arenacross rules state XBladez will have to put in a replacement rider to fill in for the 44-year-old American.



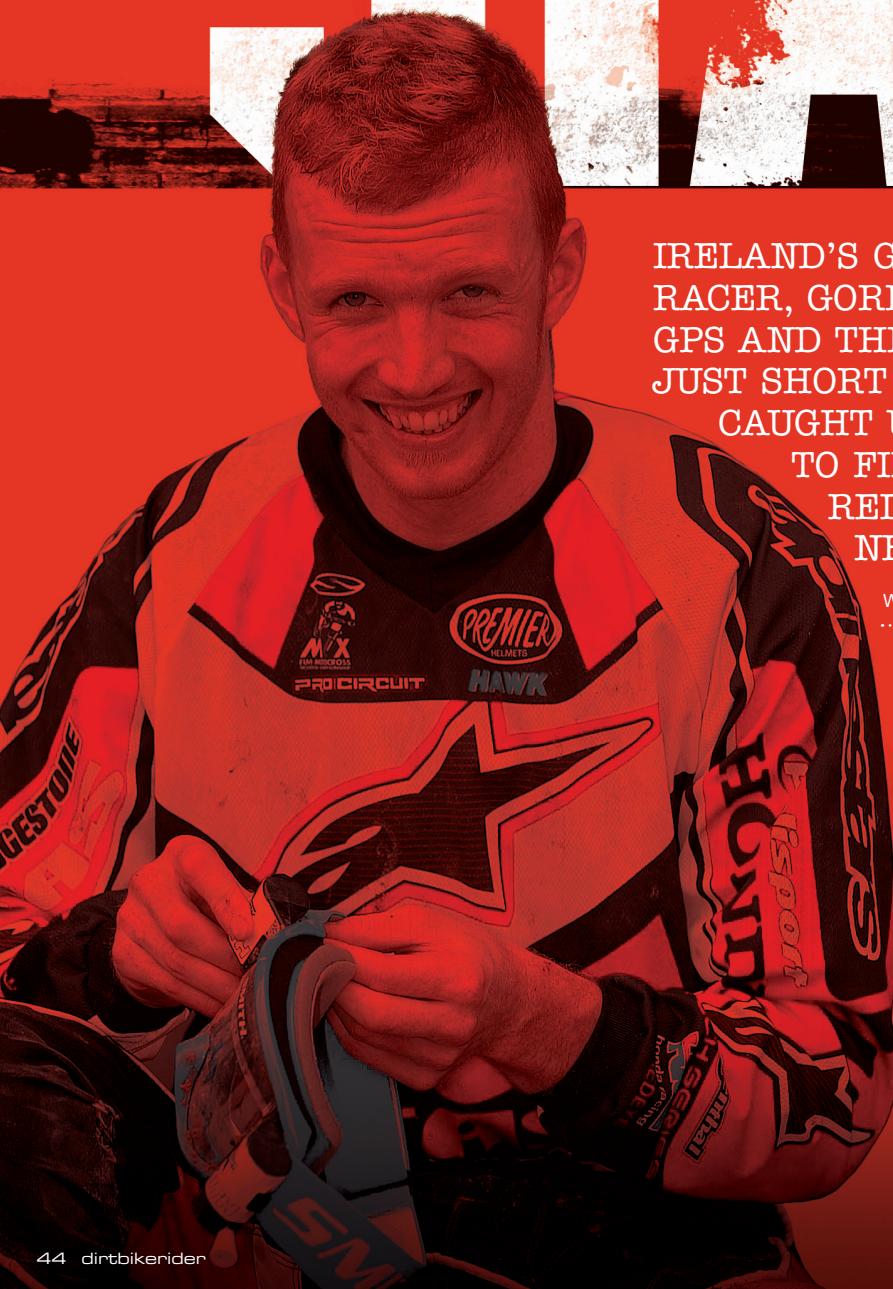
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# GORDON CROCKARD



IRELAND'S GREATEST EVER MOTOCROSS RACER, GORDON CROCKARD WON FOUR GPS AND THREE BRITISH TITLES BUT FELL JUST SHORT OF THE ULTIMATE PRIZE. WE CAUGHT UP WITH THE 37-YEAR-OLD TO FIND OUT ABOUT THE RAPID REDHEAD'S RISE, FALL AND NEW CAREER IN MOVIES...

Words by Sean Lawless Photos by Ray Archer

Less than 10 minutes into our conversation Gordon Crockard tells me something that pretty much stops me in my tracks.

"It was absolutely always about winning," he states in his soft Ulster accent. "It was always for that. Even as I was coming through anything other than a win was just a step towards winning. Getting fifths, fourths, thirds meant I was getting closer to winning. Once I was winning then that for me was really what it was all about."

Maybe I shouldn't be shocked. After all, he did an awful lot of winning – four grand prix overalls, three British championships, countless more British championship races – but in my head I've always seen him as a man who was simply in love with riding motorcycles. Good-time Gordy, every bit as happy bog-hopping with his mates in Ireland or winning local trials as he was stood on top of a Spanish GP podium.

But when he starts to talk at length about his rise and inevitable fall it becomes clear that there's much more to him than the happy-go-lucky, always grinning Gordy that made him one of the most popular riders of the modern generation.

>>





Of course, I've always known he was fiercely competitive. That was crystal clear the first time I saw him race in '96 and the many, many times I watched him in action afterwards. But even on the previous occasions I've interviewed him I didn't realise just how driven he was and this time around there's an air of melancholy and regret when he reflects on what was, what wasn't and what might have been.

He doesn't admit it – but he doesn't completely deny it either...

"I wouldn't say I'm down about it, I would say that I got so close and it feels a wee bit like I didn't just go far enough.

"I didn't win the world championship, I didn't even finish second – I got third – and that sucks. I'm not bitter, I'm not walking around thinking 'that was a failure' but a little part of me does think that. I got so close but didn't win. I wasn't good enough, that's the bottom line. [Mickael] Pichon was better. He was faster than me."

This was, of course, in 2001 when he won GPs in Belgium and Sweden and lost second in the world to Chad Reed in the final moto of the season.

"I used to joke with Kurt Nicoll that he

was so pissed off all the time because he finished second so many times in the world championship. I told him if he'd won it once he'd probably be chilled out and relaxed. I used to take the piss out of him for that and I suppose I've learned not to be like that.

"I won world championship races, I didn't win the championship but I can't complain, I can't look back on the ifs and buts and maybe. That's just how it was. I tried plenty of times but it never happened.

"It's the old story. I could look back and try and find reasons why but at the end of the day my best years were 2000 and 2001 on the 250cc two-strokes – I was nearly there but I didn't win the world championship – and then I made a mistake and went with KTM in '02."

Moving to the Austrian manufacturer was a pivotal moment for Gordy but we're getting ahead of ourselves and we'll come back to that later. First let's turn the clock back 37 years and discover the roots of his passion for motocross.

"My dad stopped racing in '78 – the year I was born – but my mum and dad continued to follow the sport. Our summer holidays were loading up the camper van and heading over to watch British championships, British Grands

Prix, Namur, Luxembourg, Dutch Grands Prix. Summer holidays would have been away in the camper van watching motocross.

"I had a BMX and I used to ride around with my dad's gear on and think I was a motocrosser. He purposely didn't get me a bike, he didn't want me to have a bike too soon and he always brought up examples of David Watson and different guys who didn't have bikes until they were maybe 12 or 13."

Gordy's dad Davy was a multi-time Irish champion who had firm views on his son's progression in motocross.

"He didn't like the idea of automatics so I got a bike when I was nine and the size to ride a 60. He actually got himself a bike as well – an '84 Yamaha 250 – and started riding again at the same time and we rented a field off a farmer near the house. We went out on our bikes every Saturday and in the summer we would have rode in the evening and it was just totally and utterly sport."

"My dad's attitude was that there was no point in me going racing if I couldn't beat him. The deal was that if I were to be faster than him then he would take me racing. By this stage I was on an RM80 because it took me three



Crockard tries to power round  
Josh Coppins and Pit Beirer



years to get good enough to beat him. I would have been 12.

"So he sold his bike and took me racing. I won my first race – it was a grass track at Comber – but whenever I went to motocross I wasn't winning, I would've been third or fourth."

It was only a matter of time before Gordy's talent started to shine through and once the wins began to come he quickly realised he liked the feeling.

"It wasn't until I got into the adults at the age of 16 that I really started to show a bit of flair. So I could ride a bike but I wasn't really interested in racing – I couldn't see what all the fuss was about."

"I don't think I was aware of the benefits and the feeling of glory of winning. I don't think I understood the pride and dignity. It's a very satisfying emotion. When you win races you can carry your head high and that can last for days and I just don't think I knew what that was."

"Once I started racing against men it became really exciting. I got a real sense of potential and people would talk to me with real encouragement and support me and whenever I saw that I realised that I was making an impression. Whenever I rode fast and won races

people really noticed it and would compliment me on it and I realised it was a really good thing."

Gordy's potential certainly was being noticed – even if not all of his fans were keen to come forward.

"Success brings a lot of advantages. I had an anonymous tyre sponsor. I'd go to school and when I got home there would be tyres left at the porch door. This went on for weeks. It wasn't until the last race of the season that a man came up and introduced himself. He said 'my name's Robin Lowe and I've been buying you tyres all year, it's been a joy watching you race'."

In 1995 he was riding a 125cc Yamaha in youth races as well as the adult Grade B Semi-Expert class in the Irish and Ulster championship. With his first adult title secured he was allowed to move up to the Grade A class for the final race of the season.

"I was riding a 250 that day which I'd borrowed from Stephen Russell. I had been selected to ride the Coupe de l'Avenir in Belgium and I figured that if I was going to be any way competitive I needed to be on a 250.

"So I rode the 250 at the last round of the >>

## LIFE AFTER RACING #1

### Putting something back

Gordy remains heavily involved in motocross through his role with the EMX150 championship – a six-round Honda-only series that's part of Youthstream's long-term plan to bring on the next generation of GP riders.

"Ultimately I am the coach of the series and I would be Event Manager at the actual races – I oversee everything. I deal with the riders and the mechanics and the organising at the event."

"I love it. I think it's a brilliant championship and a great opportunity for youth riders to learn and basically get themselves a career. The winner gets a fully-sponsored ride on the Honda EMX 250 team."

"If they go into that team and do well there's no doubt about it, they will 100 per cent be a professional racer the following year. If a boy has the desire and the talent and comes and rides in our championship there's a golden opportunity to have a career."

"That takes up seven weekends of the year where we have six rounds and one training camp. So that's what I've been doing for the last three years and going into 2016 that will be year four."



Crockard on the PAR Honda at the 2007 Belgian GP

Ulster championship at Bell's Hill. It was the Tommy Stewart Memorial and Alan Morrison came out of retirement every year to ride it and every year he won it – he pissed all over everyone and made them all look stupid every year. It was awful."

Morrison, an Irish motocross hero who won the 1990 British 125 GP, was very much the man to beat and Gordy did just that.

"I was riding in Grade B but for the last race they let me ride in the Grade A race and I caught Alan and passed him and won. That made me think that I could win the premier class in Ireland.

"So the next year I focussed on riding in Ireland in the Irish and Ulster championships on a 250 and won them both. My dad's attitude was what's the point in going to race in England if you can't win here."

I first met Gordy at Lyng in '96 when I gave him a copy of a TMX front page he'd featured

on a few weeks before thanks to a cracking photo taken by Pete Plummer.

"The picture that Pete took was from the Andrew Chambers Memorial race at Desertmartin. Some English riders had come across – Neil Prince, Denis Hewartson, Ed Bradley, those sorts of guys – which was great for me because it gave me a chance to race against British championship riders and I could gauge what sort of level I was at.

"We'd been to the des Nations at Jerez in Spain and we were on our way back and there was a week between the des Nations and the Coupe de l'Avenir and that week was when the last British championship was on at Lyng. I came and rode the support class and I think I won it and then we went over and did the Coupe de l'Avenir."

By this point he was working as a mechanic at Russell's Motorcycles who also sponsored him for his first year in the British championship

in '97 when he finished seventh with his season highlight a podium at Hawkstone Park. The following year he made a major career move by signing for the fledgling CAS Honda team.

"In '98 I turned professional. Roger Harvey had been pushing quite hard for me to ride Hondas in '97 but I wanted to stay with Yamaha. Andy Smith from Yamaha kept on matching whatever he was offering and then Roger said 'what's it going to take?' and I said I would like to live in England because I thought it would really help. So he came back with sponsorship of the rental of a house – that was Harry Ainsworth.

"I'd met him not knowing it at a clubman's race at Toddington in '96. We were running long rod kits in the Yamaha and Harry came over to ask how it was going and I think I made an impression on him because I really went into detail and I think it helped him out. His late son Scott was riding Yams at the time and he had a



## LIFE AFTER RACING #2

### Making movies

Gordy still has a home in Newtownards – where he rents a room to BSB champ Josh Brookes and stables donkeys Bingo and Jenny – but for most of 2015 he's been in England pursuing his new career.

"I also work in film and movie making and what I do is I'm a stage hand, working on the construction crew building sets for movies. The two movies I've worked on so far are Dracula and King Arthur. King Arthur – which was a Guy Ritchie film – was filmed in London so I was there for 11 months. That finished at the end of September and we now have a schedule to do reshoots so we have to build some of the sets again.

"Dracula was filmed in Belfast. I enjoyed it and learned a lot and it was something completely away from motorbikes and racing and injuries and physical training so it was a new lifestyle for me and I liked it. I've got my eyes set on continuing to do that."

After spending so much of his life on the road, Gordy's keen to stay close to his roots and the film and television industry just might let him.

"Ultimately I want to live at home in Northern Ireland and the film game is growing here and there's a lot more production and a lot more studios being built. The Game of Thrones series is filmed here but for now I'm loyal to one construction manager and whatever film he takes on I go with him.

"So I could be anywhere which I don't really want forever but that's the way it is for now but if something came up over here I'd jump at it because it means I could sleep in my own bed."

Gordy's not the only man with a dirt bike

long rod kit."

It was the start of a relationship that would see Gordy win GPs and British championships but would ultimately end in acrimony and legal proceedings.

"We rode grands prix and we rode British championship and grands prix was a big problem for me. They went from 40 riders on the line to only 30 and I couldn't qualify. I had real difficulties. It became a really upsetting situation. I had made a lot of changes in my life – I'd moved away from home, I'd left my job, I wasn't riding Yamahas and the '98 Honda wasn't brilliant, it had that rigid frame. I got quite down and sad and I didn't want to ride bikes.

"I didn't jack it in but I came home and reverted back to riding at smaller races – I didn't want to ride grands prix – and put a lot of things that were upsetting me right, got the motorbike working and started to make

small steps towards feeling positive again."

Motocross is much more than simply going out and twisting the throttle. The bike's got to be good, the rider's got to be fit and, just as importantly, his head's got to be in the right place. Ainsworth understood this and gave his new signing the space he needed.

"I returned to grands prix at the end of the year – just my dad and I – and started to qualify. Harry was very good to me in that he allowed me to do what I wanted. He always gave me that and that was a massive help.

"I explained the problems I was having and what I thought were the solutions and he supported me. So when I came back to grand prix racing I did it my way. I have to thank him for that – I wouldn't have made it if I hadn't been allowed to do it the way I wanted.

"I came back for the Belgian Grand Prix at Mol in August and I qualified. It was very, very deep sand and I knew that the race was being

televised live on Eurosport. I holeshot and led the first lap and when we came back around I went down the start straight fist-pumping and looking across at myself on the big screen. I was so happy I wanted everyone to see.

"We kept qualifying and we turned it around. Harry stuck with me which again is something I am really grateful for. I gave him lots of opportunities to be sacked."

There were no points in a debut GP season that ended dramatically when Stefan Everts crashed in Greece and handed the 250cc title to Sebastien Tortelli but the writing was on the wall – Gordon Crockard was someone to watch. He further underlined his potential with a stunning performance at the U21 MXdN and carried his momentum into the '99 season.

"I went to the Coupe de l'Avenir and I won it. That was a real important thing for me. It was important that I believed in myself and you need results.

>>



*This is a familiar view of Crockard and the CAS Honda for many Maxxis riders*



"In '99 Neil Prince came to the team and he brought Nick Moores with him. We went and rode grands prix and we qualified and finished the year in 13th in the world and fourth in the British championship, winning all three races at Farleigh. I was a bit more mature towards the end and understood myself better."

The breakthrough came in Y2K with GP wins at the season opener in Spain, another in Belgium, sixth in the world and the British Open title.

"The 2000 season was good for me. I won Talavera – my first grand prix win – but I wasn't on the podium again until Kester which was July. I remember thinking it was really important to be back on the podium because I didn't want to be the guy who won one grand prix and was never seen again."

"I didn't want to be that guy – I felt that I had the ability to be on the podium and Kester was an important part of the year for me. The rest of the year ended quite good for me. I had a series of podiums and I was getting a lot of seconds and thirds, I was going really good and I was very happy."

"My main thing that year was to try and win the British championship. It all goes back to the end of '99 when the British championship went to Farleigh Castle and I won all three races. It was the last round of the championship and that set me up for the winter with a real inspiration to try and win the British championship."

"I really believed in myself so I did a lot of preparation, a lot of training and really focussed on what I was doing. I had Nick Moores with me for the first time and Rob Herring as a team-mate and it went very, very well."

The season started badly for the team when Herring broke his wrist on the first day of pre-season training in America but Gordy's relationship with Moores was solid and the pair formed a formidable partnership.

"Having Nick with me was very positive. He was able to give me a bike I really loved and Rob was a huge hero of mine and I really looked up to him and took a lot of inspiration from him. I thought 2000 was going to be the year I won the British championship and I just concentrated really hard on doing that."

"Paul Cooper was my main challenger and all of that effort to be British champion made me good enough to win at world level. I was really surprised when I won at Talavera but I just kept focussed on trying to win the British championship."

"The last run of races were brilliant for me and I ended up sixth in the world championship which was fantastic. I was so pleased. And I won the British championship as well and had a great Motocross des Nations."

There was a radical shake-up of GPs in 2001 with the introduction of a one-moto format which Gordy doesn't feel suited him – despite the fact he had the best season of his career.

"In the year 2000 it was two times 45-minute races and I had an advantage over the other guys. We all got tired but when I got tired I didn't slow down and my riding style had a lot to do with that. In those long races whenever we had two of them in the one day I liked that. It was good for me. I was fit. Being fit is easy, you just apply yourself. It doesn't take any talent or ability – you just have to train. So I liked it whenever it was a big physical challenge."

"In 2001 there was a lot of pre-season talk about how the one-moto format was going to shake everything up and what people were doing for their physical preparation and there was a lot of speculation about who was going to be good."

The world championship didn't get off to a great start for Gordy at the series opener in Spain after he took some well-meant but ill-

Crockard won a lot of Maxxis motos – this time at Hawkstone





Desertmartin was considered to be Crockard's playground



A rare outing on a four-stroke KTM...

## DECLINING FORTUNES

### On the way down...

"After you're a champion the only way you're going is down. You either keep winning which is very hard to do because my motivation dropped once I had won the championship. It just feels harder to keep pushing – you're not chasing after something, you already know what it feels like."

"You finish second, third, fourth and fifth and start coming down. Those later years that I raced on, you have an expectation because you've won before and anything other than a win seems a failure."

"Even in 2010 when I was riding for Paul Bird on a Kawasaki I won some races and instead of people congratulating me and saying 'you rode brilliant, you were the best' they'd say 'it's great to see you riding like we know you can'. It made me feel like asking what they thought I was doing the rest of the time. Did they think I was not trying?"

"I took a really funny angle on it all and I just felt this constant expectation that because I'd won before I should always win. Well you can't do that, especially if you lose motivation because you don't invest in yourself, you don't take the risks, go practising or testing. You just don't get stuck in like your life depends on it."



informed advice.

"Going into the first GP in Bellpuig, something Stephen Russell said to me sticks in my mind, that I needed to be going to the line with beads of sweat on my forehead and pumped up and ready for this one moto. And I bought into this."

"I was leading the race and I remember getting so nervous and I got massive arm-pump as well because I had myself so hyped up and so in a tizzy that everything mattered for this one moto that I ended up crashing and I think I finished seventh or something."

A fortnight later at round two in Holland he decided to do his own thing and it paid off.

"I used to sleep a lot on race day and I did that at Valkenswaard. I got up before the race and I was yawning in the parc ferme – it was on Eurosport – but I holeshot and ended up finishing second. I remember thinking that all this talk of being hyped up didn't matter – it was about being fast and getting the bike around the track."

"So I didn't change my preparation, I just looked at it that I needed to be as fast as I possibly could be and I needed to be fit enough to last the race."

He retained his British Open title in '01 but the world championship was dominated by Pichon. The Frenchman won 10 of the 14

rounds and while Gordy won in Belgium and Sweden he finished on the podium just two more times. He was second heading into the final race of the year in Austria where Reed – in his final GP before moving to the US and attaining superstar status – pushed him back to third.

Then came the decision that possibly altered Gordy's entire career trajectory.

"In 2002 I rode a KTM. I took a calculated gamble at the end of 2001. I felt that I needed to make a change. I was competing against Pichon on a factory Suzuki, Chad Reed at the time was on a factory Kawasaki, Bolley was on a factory Honda and I had Nick Moores who was modifying standard bikes. We were trying to win the world championship on a modified production bike."

"I had three offers – KTM, Kawasaki and Suzuki factory bikes – and I went with KTM. At the time KTM had focussed on 125s and had dominated, they'd focussed on the Open class and won and they were telling me that the focus was now on the 250 class."

"I thought with what they'd achieved in those other categories it was going to work and it didn't work. It was a lost year."

With 2001 125cc world champion Jamie Dobb as his team-mate, Gordy went into the season as a contender but was never a real >>



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threat and ended the year seventh with his best result a second in Austria.

At home he was still a contender but he missed out on a hat-trick of British titles.

"In 2002 I paid for everything to do with the British championship out of my own pocket. I didn't have a deal with KTM Austria to ride it and KTM UK didn't offer me any assistance but I did it because I wanted to be British champion."

"I actually feel that the championship was robbed off me that year. At Culham, on the first lap of the first race, a stone came off David Campbell's back wheel and smashed right through my goggles and broke my nose so I was in hospital for the rest of the day. I didn't score any points and that was three races."

"At that moment I was leading the British championship and went from that to being miles behind. Then at Pontrilas the gearbox broke on my KTM and I had a DNF and that put me totally and utterly out of it."

"Those two things, if they hadn't happened I think I would have been British champion."

For 2003 he went back to CAS Honda and onto a 450cc four-stroke and dominated at

home.

"I won so many races that I was able to afford to sit out the round at Lyng because my shoulder had been dislocated at Valkenswaard the weekend before."

But on a world level he struggled in the new MXGP class and despite a couple of podiums he was never a threat, ending the year in 11th.

"They'd changed the format and combined the classes – [Joel] Smets and [Stefan] Everts and [Marnicq] Bervoets were all in the class and it just got even harder. There were lots of little injuries – a broken finger, a broken arm – but my shoulder was the big one, I had a separated AC joint. I just had a series of injuries which made it hard to be a contender."

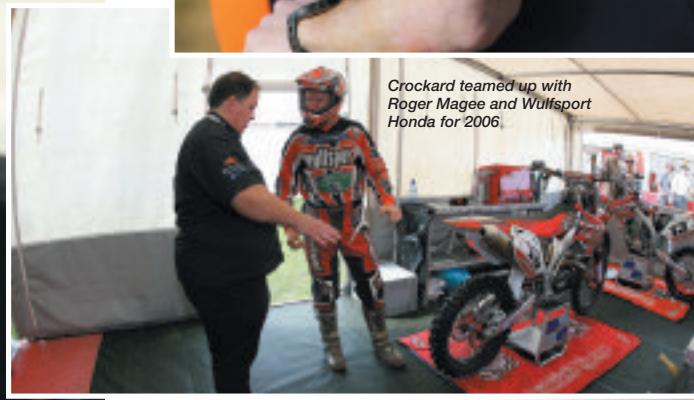
He was reunited with Moores the following season but after initial promise 2004 was over very quickly for Gordy.

"Nick came back from the KTM factory and he joined me again at CAS after much, much persuasion and pre-season practising and testing in California had been going brilliant."

"Stefan Everts was dominating the races at the Hawkstone International and something happened to me in the first race – I think my >>



Gordy never gelled with the Dixon Yamaha



Crockard teamed up with Roger Magee and Wulfsport Honda for 2006.



## GORDY'S GOALS

He shoots, he scores...

"I inherited my dad's attitude. He always said 'what are you on the line for, what's the objective of starting this race?' and it was to win it. That was it. It was about winning."

"The first year I went to the British championship we were realistic – I wasn't sitting on the line at Canada Heights at round one in 1997 thinking that I was there to win the race but it was the start of a goal, I had to work in steps."

"It was a case of we'd go for three years and if I hadn't got it won in three years I was never going to do it and that was the way we always looked at it. It was the same in Ulster championships, in Irish championships so I had short-term goals and long-term goals."



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## ACHILLES HEEL

### Start aches

"The ultimate is to be world champion and I proved on a number of occasions that I was in that area but a few things let me down throughout my whole career, mainly my starts."

"If I got the holeshot or started top three or even top five in every GP I did I wonder how many races I would have won and I wonder how many world championships I would have won. That's the raw fact of it – any time I got a good start at a grand prix I either won the race or finished on the podium."

"Something as simple as making good starts or not making could starts could have been the difference in me winning a world championship or two or three world championships."

"You just wonder because it's life-changing being world champion and finishing second or third, nobody remembers. Nobody knows. You've got to win, that's the bottom line."

"In a British championship if I made a bad start I could still recover but the competition was too strong in a grand prix. It's a wee bit of a thing that sticks with me."

"I tried everything to fix it. It reminds me of golf actually. I can't play – I'm not a golfer – but sometimes you can hit a ball and it goes exactly where you want it and then you do the same thing expecting the same results and you slice it into the trees. I never got to the bottom of it."

"I never qualified well which was another thing I had to address. When I grew up all my preparation was for racing – not a one-lap flier – and that was the way I designed my riding style. Everything was focussed on being a good racer and that came into my calculations – I thought maybe I'm not getting good starts because of where I qualified so I worked on being good at qualifying and learned how to do it. And it didn't really make much difference."

exhaust broke – and I ended up coming into the pits. I rejoined behind Everts and rode round behind him for the rest of the race which proved to me that I was fit and fast and that the bike was working well.

"The next race I did was Canada Heights which was a complete mudbath. I had no goggles and was riding like a maniac, put my foot into a rut and it totally rotated and dislocated my knee and wrecked it. I went home and saw a surgeon and the ACL was torn and the cartilage was torn."

Gordy still travelled to Zolder the following weekend for the first GP of the year and qualified but the torn cartilage in his knee kept locking his leg. Faced with no choice but surgery, he was out for more than four months.

"In that time the British championship was gone, the world championship was gone and I also had a big fall-out with the CAS team. I came back and rode the remainder of the year but that entire season was a big negative. The fall-out with CAS was very, very difficult with so

many good years together and such great memories."

A move to Yamaha with Steve Dixon followed in '05 but his season was marred by a broken wrist and a lack of confidence in his Ohlins suspension before things improved in '06 with Roger Magee's Honda team. And there was yet another change of team in '07 when he rode for PAR Honda and showed good form in the British championship and at GPs but something was missing.

"All the time I was trying to get back into that area of winning world championship races but if you're not even on the pace then you can't win the races and you're definitely not going to win the world championship. It all did go downhill from the minute I got injured in '04."

"At the end of '07 I took interest in enduro and I knew BMW were putting together a factory team to go world enduro racing and someone suggested I should speak to them."

It would be his sixth team in seven years on four different marques and this time it was a

totally different sport.

"I ended up racing in America in the GNCC. I went away from motocross completely and to be honest it was all about money. The deal with Roger in '06 was that I got £100-per-point in the world championship and I scored 176 points – that was my income, not profit and I had to get to all the races so I didn't make anything at all in '06 and I got to the end of '07 and thought 'what am I doing with my career?'. I had bills to pay and needed to make money."

"BMW offered me a two-year deal and it was 80 grand a year. It was a no-brainer so away I went. On paper I was a good trials rider and a good motocross racer and generally I was an endurance man – long grand prix races suited me. So I was excited and motivated and I put my heart into it."

To say Gordy and his team boss Scott Summers didn't see eye-to-eye is a massive understatement and the problems were compounded by a lack of bikes.

At the time BMW also owned Husqvarna and >>



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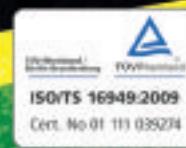
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## FACTORY FIASCO

### The game-changer...

"I think that with the input of factory teams, their experience, all the technology they have access to, I think that must help but I'll never really know."

"Although I went to factory KTM we were struggling with the basics of just getting the motorbike to work. It was the first time that they'd got into 250cc two-stroke racing probably since the likes of Mike Healey and those guys back in the '90s. It was a completely new motorbike and it was miles away from what it needed to be."

"There were a few mistakes made as well in-house. They used new young guys in their R&D department and they didn't have the experience [of the old engineers and technicians] and they weren't very good at their jobs and that's the root of the problem."

"So the bike was way off. It was completely wrong. It was a failed project and it was put to one side I think a year-and-a-half later. McGrath rode the bike and pretty much retired from it."

"The engine was all up top. There was loads and loads of horsepower and it was all at the top end of the power curve which was the opposite of what I wanted. I wanted everything to be smooth and strong off the bottom."

"So that was the first problem I had. After that the handling was, er, unusual. We used a PDS in the back and that may have worked fine on a 125 and on a four-stroke – they don't really spin up the back wheel the same way – but on a 250cc two-stroke it just wasn't right. It didn't handle right when I was accelerating."

"We were trying to work with those things, never mind getting into the nitty gritty of different engine set-ups for different tracks and trying to work out the optimum configuration for trying to make good starts. Those were times of dealing with bigger problems as opposed to dealing with small things. It wasn't good at all."



with the opening round looming Gordy was told to fly to the US where there was a Husky waiting for him for the first round in Florida at the start of March.

"We were totally disorganised and absolutely unprepared. The bikes were standard, didn't even have big tanks – it was a total joke of a set-up."

To make matters worse ongoing visa problems meant Gordy wasn't getting paid and when his visa eventually came through – two-thirds of the way into the series – and he finally got his money he left.

"The whole project failed. It was a disaster. They never got BMW bikes and it was an absolute nightmare. That was an incredible disappointment for me. I had gone away from motocross, I had moved to America and given up so much and been so excited about this new direction my career was going in."

"My performances on that bike weren't good enough for any of the teams over there to take an interest in me. And I also discovered I don't really like racing in the woods. I wasn't passionate about it. That particular style of

racing, I didn't feel that comfortable, I felt quite dangerous because I didn't know what was coming next."

"I came back in the summer of '08 and Paul Rowlands immediately offered me sponsorship and I rode for Paul and had some good races. I really enjoyed it."

Back with PAR for 2009 alongside Brad Anderson, Gordy was involved in an horrific start straight crash at the Hawkstone International that almost proved fatal.

"That was immediately the end of that season and potentially the end of my racing career. I suffered grave injuries. I had five broken ribs, five broken vertebrae, a broken collarbone, a smashed spleen and I almost died."

Amazingly, he came back to finish the season but – inevitably – coming so close to death was playing on his mind.

"I was really tentative – I didn't know how I was going to feel in a race – and as it turned out I was fine riding the bike but at the start of some races going into the first corner I found I was nervous and I didn't welcome that."

"As hard as I tried to think about it logically >>>



## VAN-SANITY!

### Booze, bikes and burn-outs...

"It was Farleigh Castle and I think it was '99 and it was Neil Prince's van and I think Neil's 125. We were coming back from the pub to the paddock – we were celebrating so I started the bike up and did a burn-out in the back of the van. It nearly killed us – burning tyre and two-stroke fumes."

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I just couldn't get that to go away. It's understandable and I'm not embarrassed by that – I don't think I was a pussy – it was just because what I went through."

A one-off ride at the world indoor enduro round in Sheffield at the end of the year resulted in a chance meeting with Leo Cordingley who had worked with David Knight that season in the EWC. Cordingley suggested Gordy might like to try racing world enduro and a meeting was set up at Paul Bird's workshops.

The EWC deal never came off but, instead, Gordy ended up winning that year's British SX title on Bird's hybrid machine – a KX250 two-stroke engine in a 250F aluminium frame – which led to a 450 ride outdoors in 2010.

"I was fit and strong and what was lovely about that year was each time I got a good result it was like 'that was fantastic after the injuries you had' so where I felt before that I had this downward slippery slope of not getting the results I used to get and jumping from team to team, after the accident each time I rode well it was applauded.

"The label of 'Gordon Crockard, British champion, grand prix winner, third in the world' seemed to have removed and it was now this 'near death survivor' tag and that was really refreshing.

"People spoke to me in a very different way and I didn't feel that I was on a campaign to save my career. Prior to this crash it was almost like I was trying to keep the career going and cling on to who I was, in 2010 it was like a blank page and all that history was total put away.

"It was a fresh start and I got good results and it felt like this weight of pressure had been >>



## MIND THE GAP!

### Why four-strokes are bad

"I didn't struggle at all to move to the four-stroke and I thought it was a very positive move for me. My opinion changed in later years.

"I think four-strokes are easier to ride, I think that you need less talent to be able to ride them well and I think the gap between really good guys and exceptionally good guys is smaller. I thought it was a positive but it's actually a negative.

"If we had all stayed on 250 two-strokes I'd probably have had more success just because I was able to ride them well and knew how to set them up and although the KTM was an outright failure I could have restored my career if I'd got back onto a Honda or a Kawasaki or some other proven bike.

"I did well on the four-stroke but eventually I found it harder and harder to be better than the other guys."



removed. In the British championship I think I was lying fourth, I won a couple of rounds of the Red Bull Pro Nationals and we almost went grand prix racing to replace Jonathan Barragan."

A ride with the Irish-based TAS Suzuki team alongside Mel Pocock followed in 2011 but Gordy failed to gel with the bike and at the end of the season he flew Down Under where he raced for Craig Anderson's team in the Australian SX championship.

"Craig and I got along brilliant. His team was good and he liked me riding for him. I was holding off on doing anything because I hoped we could put a deal together and I could ride the nationals in Australia in 2012.

"It didn't happen straight away. Craig was riding himself but he wanted to retire so he called me up and asked me if I wanted to go over so I rode some of the nationals, then they had a break in the series so I came back to the UK. The hope was Craig could rally up some sponsorship money to pay for me to go back over and ride out the rest of the year but he couldn't."

Having left things so late there was no deal in the UK so Gordy was riding a 450 Kawasaki supplied by Norman Watt Motorcycles in local races.

"Then I got an opportunity from Steve James at LPE Kawasaki and it worked out well and I had some decent results. I was trying to get

a job as a full-time member of the team in 2013 but it didn't happen."

And that was, sadly, that – after 16 years of contesting the British championship race fans haven't seen him compete at that level since, although there was a last-minute call-up to Team Ireland for the 2014 MXdN.

"I ride the bikes a lot but I don't compete anymore on any professional level. I feel that I've done enough racing in my time and I just don't get it anymore. I'm not motivated to race. I achieved way more than I ever wanted to and I don't have that desire to chase after championships and race wins."

"I certainly don't have anything to prove to myself. I've sort of done all that."



## VMXDN Retro redhead

"The VMXDN is something that I do enjoy and when I go there I totally enjoy the event. I went there for a few years as a potential race winner and I won some races and ran right up at the front."

"I find myself getting caught up in the competitive side of that and trying to win the races and I very quickly realised that that just makes me frustrated. The nature of that event, it's kind of tricky with the bike because some people don't conform completely to the spirit of the event to run original pre-89 bikes. They may be running a bike that looks pre-89 but they've got modern suspension and modern brakes and that started to frustrate me a little bit."

"I was getting so competitive just with trying to win races there and this year I rode a 125 and that took me out of that completely and I actually enjoyed it more because I wasn't under pressure to win the races or run at the front."

## GORDY ON...

### 2005 with Steve Dixon

"I recall it as a season of frustration. Steve had acquired support from Rinaldi and had the 2004 engines from Stefan Everts. The bikes were very fast. We had an option on Ohlins or Kayaba suspension and I took the option of factory support from Ohlins. And I really regret it. It didn't work for me and I ended up losing all confidence in the bike and rode it in terrible fear of crashing."

"We got to Portugal at Agueda and I crashed on the step-up just after the first corner and broke my scaphoid. I had to have surgery and came back and raced later in the year on standard bikes – I'd lost a lot of motivation and confidence."

"I had so many doubts about the Ohlins suspension and even the Rinaldi Everts engine so Steve accommodated me and what I was trying to do. It wasn't a good year for me at all and I felt really down after everything that had happened the previous year."

### 2006 with Roger Magee

"I went with Roger Magee in '06 – I just wanted to ride a Honda and get back onto something I was familiar with."

"We got stuck-in and I had a much better year and things were going in the right direction. We were racing grands prix and I had some good results but ultimately it still wasn't what I wanted. I felt that I was on this slippery slope of getting away from my best years and that was difficult."

"I was getting these opportunities and if I didn't improve these opportunities would become even less. People stop believing you and providing you with good bikes and parts."

### 2007 with Paul Rowlands

"In '07 I thought I'd try and do my own thing. Paul Rowlands was there to offer support for the British championship."

"At the end of '06 I raced the Belfast SX on a 250cc two-stroke and rode really well. I actually got a lot of backing and sponsorship from that one race for the '07 season. Maybe 10 personal sponsors came on board and their money basically paid for my grand prix season in '07."

"I still had real hunger and real fire and I got stuck-in and I actually won the first British championship at Canada Heights. The grand prix races were going well and it was a really positive forward progression. It was really going good – so much so a good mate of mine talked me into spending my own money to go to the race in Japan."

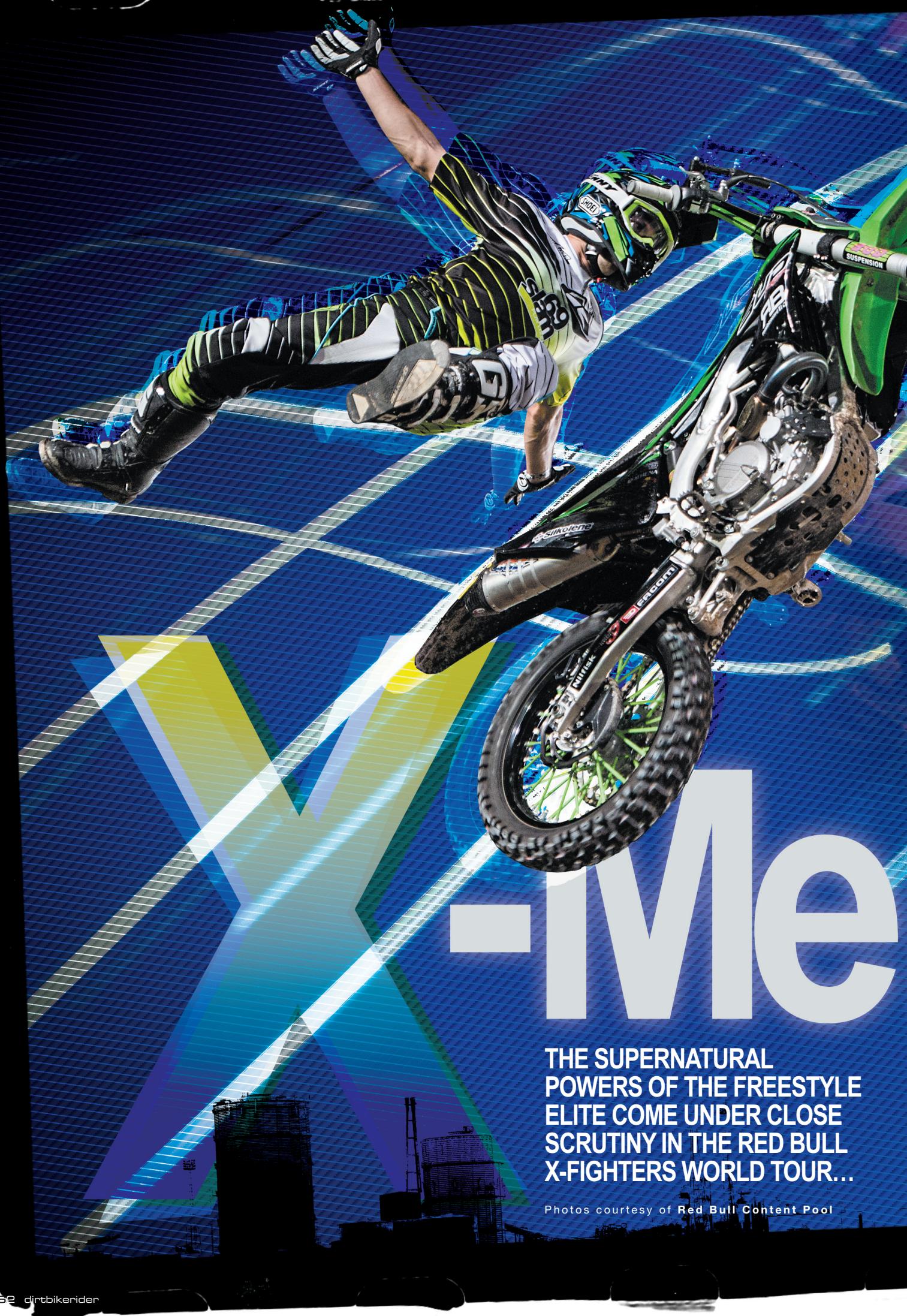
"The top 15 in the world championship got something like 3000 Euros to pay for their expenses and I was two points off that. I'd just had some really good races – I think I had a fourth and a fifth in Germany and set the fastest lap of the race and then we went to Mantova the weekend after and I had maybe a fifth and a sixth."

"So I spent about five grand going there and it was a disaster. I think my transponder came loose and jammed the steering and I crashed and lost a glove. I rode on and got this massive blister on my hand. Then I had an argument with Youthstream – they weren't going to let me do the second race unless I paid them 300 Euros for a new transponder."

"I lost my way a little bit after that with the grands prix. I got a small injury and just lost that momentum."

"The British championship was going really good for me too – I was a contender, right up there at the front. Then I broke a chain at Langrish. If I'd done one more lap I'd have finished second which would have meant I would have been leading the championship by two points."

"I ended the year wondering if I was doing the right thing – I probably lost money that year – but I wasn't in it to make money, I was in it to try and get myself back on the map, to be able to get paid to ride in grands prix on good bikes. And I wasn't far away but it didn't happen."



# -Me

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X-FIGHTERS WORLD TOUR...

Photos courtesy of Red Bull Content Pool





Remi Bizouard ends the tour  
in eighth spot overall

# X-Men!

Who says Kiwis can't fly? Levi Sherwood proves otherwise...



**L**ove it or loathe it there's no denying that freestyle motocross is big business right now with FMX-packed action sports shows like Masters of Dirt and Nitro Circus selling out arenas throughout Europe and beyond. While these non-competitive productions are admittedly awesome we can't help but think that FMX is that little bit better when there's more than just the adulation of fans up for grabs...

The Red Bull X-Fighters has been pitching the globe's top freestyle talent together since 2001 and has crowned some very credible and worthy winners over the years including FMX legends Mike Jones, Edgar Torronteras, Travis Pastrana, Mat Rebaud and Nate Adams. It's also helped create heroes too like Spain's Dany Torres, technically gifted Frenchman Thomas Pages and the current breed of Aussie bruisers who – with the help of offbeat TV channel Dave – are on the brink of becoming household names in the UK.

The home of witty banter has run full coverage of the X-Fighters for a fair few years now and as a result the series is gaining popularity in Blighty. Okay, so guys like Josh Sheehan, Clinton Moore, Rob Adelberg and Levi Sherwood ain't gonna get mobbed on arrival at Heathrow Airport but a proportion of the British public are interested in which of them comes out on top in the X Fighters World Tour which is pretty cool if you ask us.

Regular viewers will have seen that the 2015 tour was dominated by two riders – Clinton Moore and Thomas Pages who arrived at the Abu Dhabi finale tied on points after picking up two wins, a second place and one third spot each over the opening four rounds. That meant whoever reigned supreme in the UAE would be crowned tour champion.

Moore dominated qualifying with flawless runs while Pages crashed in each of his meaning that when the scores were all added up the Frenchman found himself in ninth place! Not only would he have to compete in a four-rider run-off to even bag a place in the quarter-finals but once there he'd immediately go up against the #1 qualifier Clinton Moore – the championship would be decided much quicker than anticipated.

"It's a bit of a bummer that I'll have to go head-to-head against Tom right away in the quarter-finals because I really wanted to go up against him in the final," said Moore. "There's pressure on all of us and if Tom doesn't make any mistakes then we've already seen that I can't beat him."

But if the Rockstar supported rider was feeling any pressure it really didn't show on the night as he aced his quarter-final run while Pages screwed up the landing of his Alley-Oop Flair once more. With the title decided in Clinton's favour he then went on to overcome Maikel Malero in the semi-final and Rob Adelberg in the main event to take a stunning victory on the night – his third win of the year!

"It feels like all the hard work and determination has finally paid off," said the freshly crowned champ afterwards. "Winning the X-Fighters title has always been a dream and the dream has come true for me now."



Thomas Pages took the battle to the very final round



Spain's Dany Torres gets upsidetown in Madrid

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# Men!



Pages' tricks are uber-technical



Levi Sherwood goes big at the season finale



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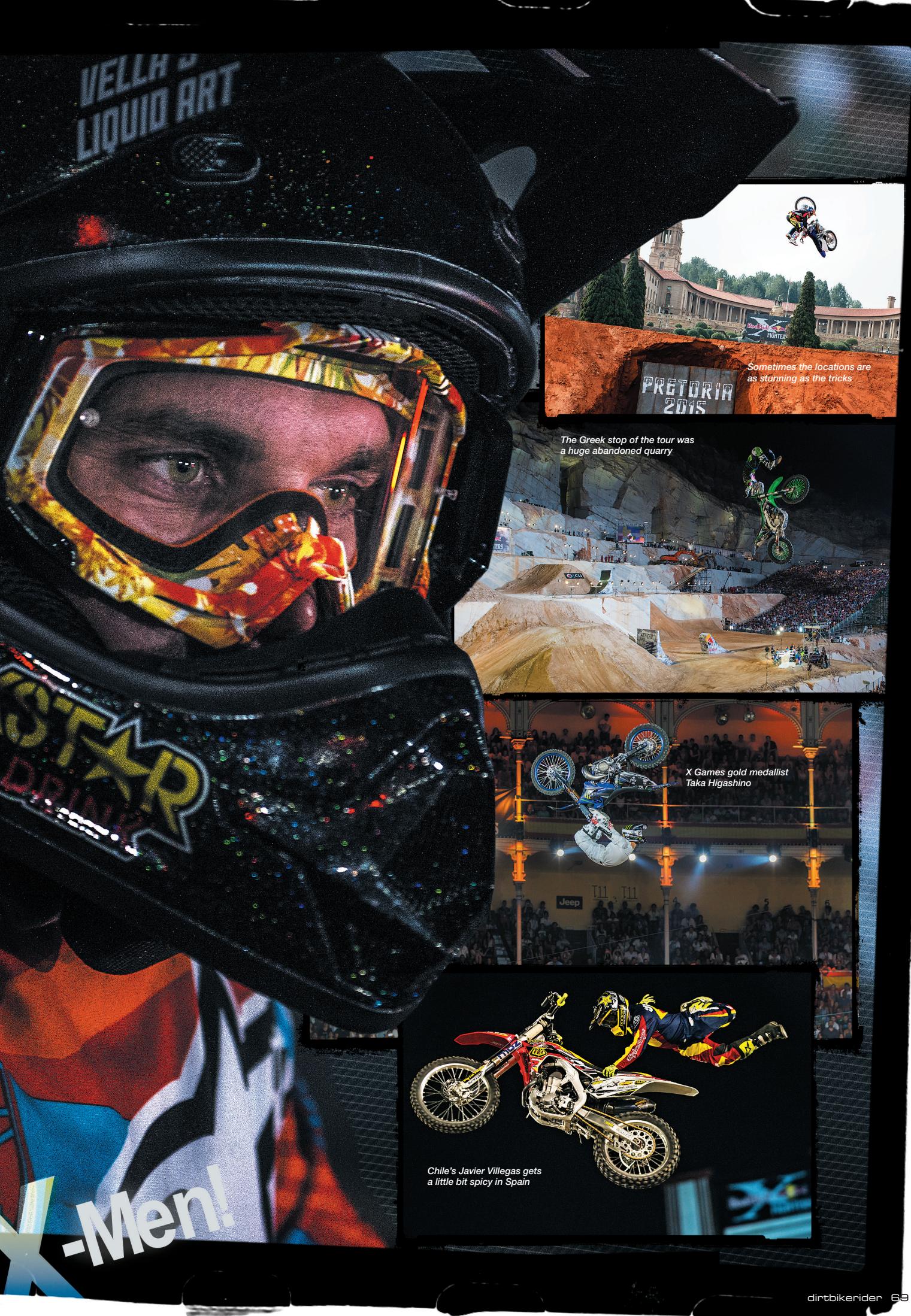
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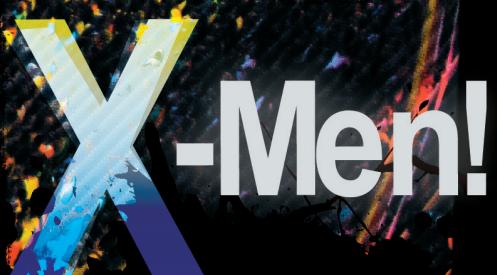
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2015 tour champion Clinton Moore



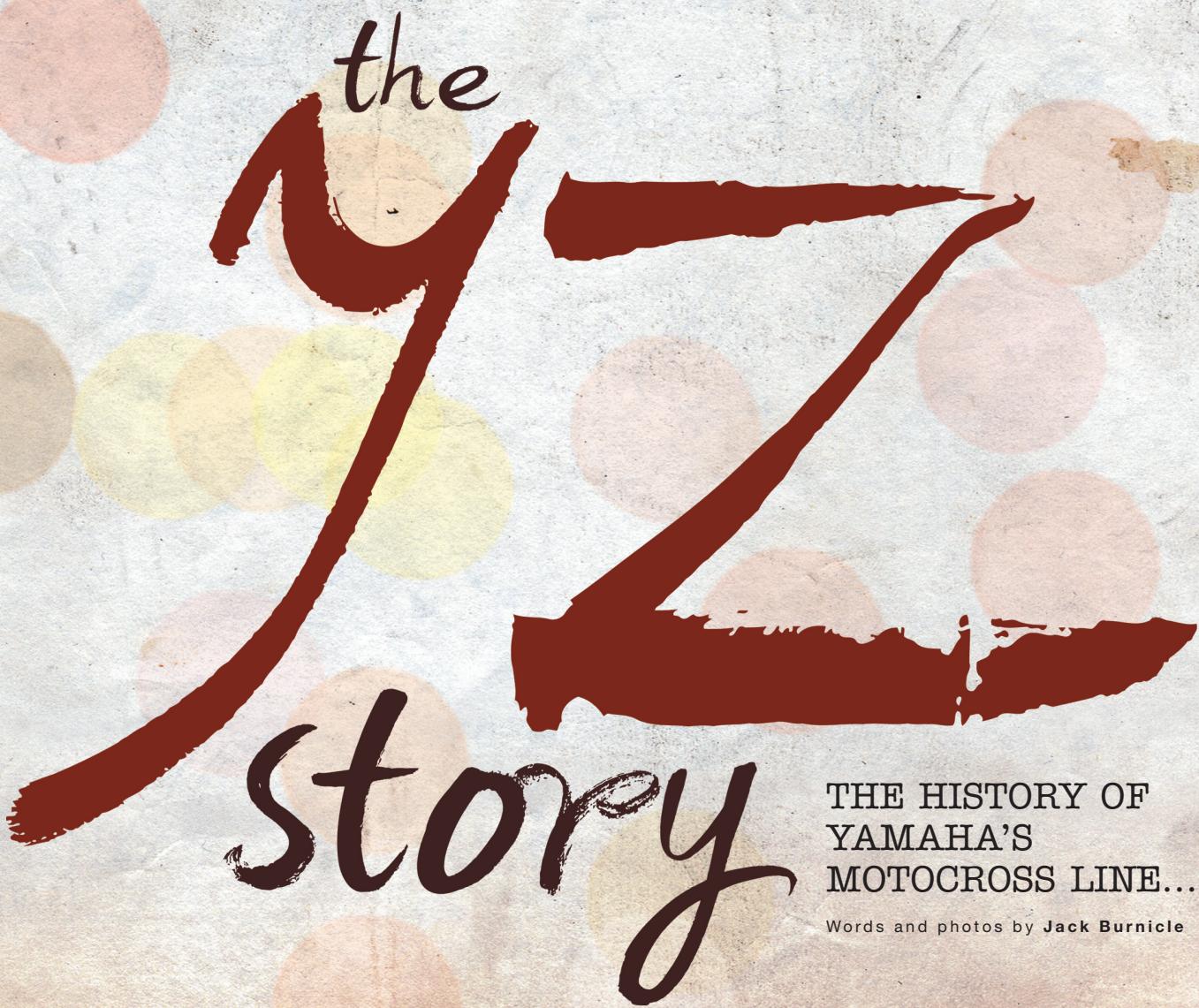
## Red Bull X-Fighters

Final series standings

1	Clinton Moore	380
2	Thomas Pages	305
3	Rob Adelberg	215
4	Josh Sheehan	210
5	Levi Sherwood	185



Danny LaPorte seals the 1982  
250cc world championship at  
Vimmerby, in Sweden



# the 91 story

## THE HISTORY OF YAMAHA'S MOTOCROSS LINE...

Words and photos by **Jack Burnicle**

**Y**amaha's iconic YZ motocross brand earned its 24th world championship with Romain Febvre's success in 2015, 43 years after winning in its second season on the world stage.

But Yamaha's off-road racing pedigree far pre-dated that historic title challenge by Swede Hakan Andersson. When they introduced their 125cc YA1 motorcycle in 1955 it gained successive victories in two of Japan's most important speed events – the Asama Volcano road race and Mount Fuji hill-climb which were both run on dirt roads.

A dozen years later the first factory Yamaha motocrosser, the 250cc YXO26, made a triumphant debut in the non-world championship Japanese Grand Prix at Kooriyama. That YXO26 became the basis of motorcycling's first modern dual-purpose enduro machine, the 1968 Yamaha DT1, a bike

equally at home on or off-road that created a whole new category of motorcycle. The DT1 proved a consistent winner in American desert races like the Baja 1000 and competed with distinction in the ISDT.

The DT1 was also offered for sale with a special motocross tuning kit and spearheaded the company's mini-invasion of Europe in 1970 when 250 national champion Tadao Suzuki raced selected continental GPs alongside namesake and junior national champ Hideaki Suzuki. Tadao actually winning a Dutch national race. At the same time Yamaha development staff collated information about both riders and machines in Europe in preparation for a full-scale entry into grand prix competition.

In 1971 they introduced the RT360, then the largest two-stroke on the market and in June of that year the first pure racing Yamaha, the DT250MX, made its debut. Four-time world champion Torsten Hallman visited

Japan and offered invaluable advice on the machine spec likely to be successful in GPs and in 1972 Yamaha won its first Japanese MX championship and launched the first YZ250 in the hands of Hakan Andersson, Christer Hammegren and Belgian Jaak van Velthoven.

This esteemed trio contested several 500GPs as well as a full 250 season in which Andersson won the 10th round in Sweden and finished runner-up in the world to Suzuki's Joel Robert. And Van Velthoven proved the YZ360's worth with victory in the final 500GP of the year in Luxembourg!

Sporting a brand new triangulated monoshock rear suspension system for 1973 – the 'monocross' – Andersson won the Belgian GP and eventually tied up Yamaha's groundbreaking first world title in Finland with two rounds to spare, winning 11 motos all told. Van Velthoven and another Swede, Ake Jonsson, finished third and fourth in the >>

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**New Yamaha YZ450F. Forward Thinking.**

LaPorte rails a berm during his title winning year



Michele Rinaldi won the 1984 world 125 championship as a rider before masterminding Yamaha's success for the past 24 years

500GPs and for 1974 this trio was joined by sturdy new Japanese national champion Torao Suzuki, who finished runner-up in the European 125 series (which became a world championship the following year) behind Andre Malherbe's Zundapp.

Andersson was also pushed back to second in the 1974 250GP series but after briefly withdrawing from competition due to an uncertain international economy Yamaha bounced back in 1977, fielding the Flying Finn, Heikki Mikkola, aboard a brand new YZM400. Already 500 world champ in 1974 and 250cc king in 1976 for Husqvarna, the rugged ice blue-eyed Mikkola murdered the opposition in 1977 and repeated his mastery of the 500cc world championship in 1978 when he won eight out of 12 rounds!

For 1979 Yamaha signed three-time 125 world champ Gaston Rahier but the tiny Belgian could only finish third while Mikkola, injured early in the season, salvaged fifth on the 500 before announcing his retirement. So Yamaha once again turned to Husqvarna's reigning 250cc world champion and hired mighty Swede Hakan Carlqvist alongside the fast but fragile Belgian Andre Vromans. Injury intervened again and the pair finished fourth and fifth in 1980 while electrifying Belgian teenager Marc Vekeneers, on the first watercooled YZ125, thrashed world champion Harry Everts at the opening GP in Holland before fading to fourth overall.

The following year Yamaha mated 1979 world 250 vice-champion Neil Hudson with Ulsterman Dave Watson while Vekeneers was joined by another teenager, Frenchman Jacky Vimond. The new YZ250 sported watercooling but the radiators clogged up in a desperately muddy first round in France and the air cooled 1980 bike returned for the rest of a dramatic year in which the Brits benefitted from having Heikki Mikkola as their team manager. Hudson trailed >>



Bob Moore flies uphill at Foxhill 1994 British GP on his way to the world title



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Jacky Vimond (Yamaha YZ250) at Unadilla, 1986

At Maggiora's great rider reunion in 1992, Jacky Vimond (right) met his boyhood hero Hakan Andersson!



injured 1980 champion Georges Jobe by 11 points going into the last 250GP at Apeldoorn in the Netherlands. But despite being flattened in the first turn of the second moto and remounting dead last, the West countryman staged a thrilling fightback to nail Yamaha's first 250 crown since 1973.

For 1982 Hudson joined Carlqvist on the YZ490, his place in 250GPs taken by Californian rookie Danny LaPorte. After 15 years of research, Yamaha engineers had come up with a mechanical valve located in the top of the exhaust port that could vary exhaust timing to suit rpm. Called 'YPVS', it transformed the power characteristics of a two-stroke engine. LaPorte, a spectacular former American national champion, engaged in a massive season-long battle with Jobe and Kees van der Ven that ended in the fast sandy woodlands of Vimmerby, southern Sweden, where Heikki Mikkola sprayed the finishing line champagne over Yamaha's second successive world 250 champ!

Hudson finished third in his rookie 500GP campaign and with a new 'rising rate' monocross suspension for 1983 we witnessed a colossal season-long duel between Carlqvist and Honda-mounted Andre Malherbe which Carla won in dramatic style in the last race of the season, the brutal aircooled 'Motor of Death' in the powerful hands of the SuperSwede somehow overcoming HRC's silky smooth watercooled factory weapon.

But the YZ490 was by now an antiquated engine and Carlqvist fought the Hondas in vain for the next three frustrating seasons despite the introduction, in 1985, of a plastic reed valve induction system and front disc brake. Kent Ohlins' legendary Swedish suspension company also joined forces exclusively with Yamaha in 1986, their compact rear shock absorber further improving the monocross rear end and Jacky Vimond, having capitulated at the final 250GP in 1985, claimed France's

first ever world title in 1986. He was followed into the record books by aggressive young Dutchman John van den Berk, who claimed Yamaha's first 125 world crown world in 1987 before completing a Yamaha hat-trick by winning the 250cc series in 1988.

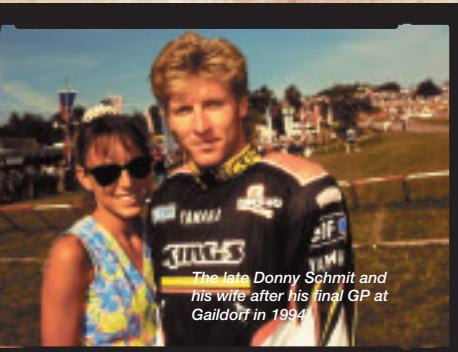
A four-year hiatus preceded another successful season, when Michele Rinaldi's Chesterfield squad swapped to Yamaha and hired 1990 125 world champion Donnie Schmit. The determined Yank won the 1992 world 250 title at his first attempt, ahead of team-mate Bob Moore, and the modest clever Rinaldi – Italy's first ever world champion in 1986 – has steered Yamaha's grand prix endeavours ever since.

Confident Californian Moore claimed the 1994 125 world crown for Rinaldi and three years later Chico Chiodi followed suit. Another deceptively shy Italian, with an endearing stammer, crowned Yamaha's return to the big-bore class, Andrea Bartolini winning the last 500cc world title of the 20th century aboard their revolutionary 400cc four-stroke! Bored out to 450cc, this game-changing motorcycle would go on to lift six successive world motocross championships from 2001 until 2006, ridden by legendary Belgian Stefan Everts under Rinaldi's astute guidance!

The 125cc series had morphed into MX2, so Yamaha introduced their YZ250F. Meanwhile another Italian former grand prix rider, Claudio de Carli, had proven his prowess as a team manager and mentor with Yamaha and in 2007 his buck-toothed little prodigy Antonio Cairoli blossomed into MX2 world champion. In 2008 the tall, elegant David Philippaerts conquered the MX1 class on his YZ450F to clinch a 10th successive world title for Yamaha, followed by an 11th in 2009 when classy Cairoli won his first big-bore crown. But the Sicilian then absconded to KTM and Yamaha's cup ran dry until Michele Rinaldi's inspired signing of Romain Febvre for 2015!



1999 500cc world champion Andrea Bartolini with his groundbreaking four-stroke Yam



The late Donny Schmit and his wife after his final GP at Gaildorf in 1994

# The real Mac



# Handle?



Billy Mac may have found his real calling in life after taking his feeling for the racetrack and applying it to the lines of custom bike building...

Words by Adam Wheeler Photos by Ray Archer

**T**he former British Champion and the first rider from the UK to win in the premier MXGP [formerly MX1] class can't suppress a sheepish laugh. We've just asked him what some of his former mechanics and race technicians through a career that spanned half of the 31 year old's lifetime would think of his new passion for getting behind the spanners and work benches himself. Could the one-time fierce 'bright light' of British motocross seriously have been considered as a custom bike builder by his technical peers? "No, absolutely not," he smiles. "I think most of them would be super-surprised that I'm doing this but I have to admit that I am more into the design part at the moment rather than the mechanical side."

We've travelled to Stirling in Scotland and a new workshop where MacKenzie has commandeered a small space away from friend Keith Amor's Racing team and fleet of BMWs. His Honda project stands almost finished and it's the first, serious attempt at flexing his creative impulses into something tangible and rideable.

It's a creditable effort and although MacKenzie is modest about his mechanical prowess (he's had copious help from the Amor clan and is quick to acknowledge their assistance and support) there has to be some validity in his thoughts and feelings towards a motorcycle...especially considering the vast number and range of bikes he has gunned and thrashed on the path from 125cc British championship shocks to Grand Prix stardom. The Honda has yet to feel the cool Scottish roads in earnest but Billy is clearly motivated by the aesthetics and possibilities before him.

"I've been playing around with the '211' made into a clock and speedometer logo. Apart from that the colours are mine, details like the seat material and the design of the fabricated rear end," he says when asked what special touches he has brought to the 750. "All the lines and the style is down to me and I've had help with the mechanical side at the moment. Also the way it feels – I get all the positioning and levers in the right place to make sure it is a comfortable ride."

MacKenzie has always been a curious personality and athlete – a real cauldron of emotions and >>



character. As likely to confound and baffle one day as rip through the fastest riders in Grand Prix the next and steer a bike with such poise and speed that it almost defies explanation.

Extroverted and individualistic but then also meek and overshadowed at other times, people enjoyed seeing Billy win races because he was fallible and realistic. He could match the speed of anybody but then also knock himself silly on some Italian hard-pack.

The mind boggles at what he might be able to create when given a reasonably open canvas of a motorcycle and what mood he is in. Today he's very chatty and quite 'up' about this new outlet in his life. Not quite retired from motocross but on the precipice of discovering what to do next (after making some decent investments in his life and having earned reasonably well from his racing he is not rushing to look at bank statements each month) MacKenzie is ready to explain this fresh direction...

**DBR:** Okay, so, what are we looking at?

**BM:** "It's a 1982 Honda CB750. I saw a CB online that I really liked the look of it. When I came back to the UK I was tearing up and down the country and hanging out with Keith Amor quite a bit and he was in the middle of

building a garage for the race team that he was starting. He was buying all the best gear and the workshop was looking pimp so if there was ever a time to build a Café Racer – with his brother helping – then that was it.

"I looked one up on Gumtree and it had all the features that I liked. I bought it and started tearing it down in the garage and tried not to get in the way. I've learned the basics and quite enjoyed putting parts together. The fact that I am interested in this kind of stuff at the moment has pushed me on. It is almost therapeutic as well – I get in the garage, put my music on and just tinker away.

"I get quite excited when I see something coming together and luckily there is always someone close at hand for any really tricky parts and even then I'm always over their shoulder and looking and learning. It is super-fun at the moment and it was a break for me away from the training and riding and routine I've always known."

**DBR:** I know you've always been interested by design and by being a bit creative. Is this the first time you have taken that curiosity to the next level?

**BM:** "No, I applied to a college to do a Graphic Design course over the winter back in

something like 2001 and 2002 and in the end saw that it wouldn't work out with time and racing so I decide to concentrate fully on what I was enjoying and making a living for myself. So I've had that interest for a long time and always with my gear and helmets I liked messing around with how they could or might look. Finally I'm going further with it."

**DBR:** What is it like with Keith? Is the workshop a place and environment where this could grow into a business?

**BM:** "It is always a good vibe and that's why I am here. Keith and I always make the best of everything when we hang out. Keith's brother, Guy, is a great mechanic, and it all just happened.

"I bought the bike early in the year but we didn't get started until after his season had finished. Up until then I was helping them get organised for the weekend and was following the road racing circuit. It was a lot of fun and we've been to some strange places – tiny towns in Northern Ireland that would have bikes screaming through at 200mph. Going to the Classic TT was also cool and watching people like John McGuinness bombing round on these old bikes.

"In the workshop I've always been waiting



for the right time to tinker and ask advice and going with the flow. It hasn't been awkward at all. At the moment I'm not doing this to start a business. I would maybe like to visit some other garages around the world and see what they are doing. Get travelling, buy a bike somewhere, get it running and looking nice and then selling it before moving on. Those are the ideas that have been going through my head recently. I still want to see more of the world – that bigger place outside the realm of motocross tracks."

**DBR:** Knowing you get a bit OCD about stuff you are 'into'...have you been checking out other custom builders? People like Roland Sands or Deus Ex for example?

**BM:** "My eyes sometimes go cross-eyed through all the companies and information you can see and find on Instagram and Facebook. I'll take screenshots, note down ideas and stuff and think how I would spin it. I've enjoyed that overflow and it's kept me occupied and motivated. I like a company called Hookiego and another one called Autofabrica – these guys are really setting the standard for customised and cool bikes in my opinion.

"There are other people, like you mentioned, Roland Sands' artistic work is cool even if I'm

not that keen on some of his bikes but I appreciate the design aspect of it. Deus is a decent brand and well recognised and to get anything like that kind of level of popularity would be a total winner. At the moment it is all about: what I want to do and how I want the bikes to look rather than thinking about 'churning them out'."

**DBR:** Considering you spent over half of your life predominantly riding one type of bike is there any motocross influence there at all?

**BM:** "I think the interest in graphic design came through watching [Jeremy] McGrath in the mid-90s and working with people like Fox. I think their approach to the way things looked affected me a lot and will always be in the back of my mind."

**DBR:** Are you prepared if this thing takes off and people start asking you to build more frequently? Orders getting placed...

**BM:** "Absolutely. If the energy is right and I'm inspired by what a client wants and if we both have a vision of what looks cool and what doesn't then I think there will be some trust there. I need to get this bike finished-off and out there...maybe people will like it. If they don't then I guess I'll need to find something else!" >>



**DBR:** You're in quite a unique position. There can't be too many Grand Prix winners and British Champions doing this sort of work...

**BM:** "I'd like to think so. I would hate for the fact that I've been in motocross for so long to have little relevance apart from the fact that I can ride a bike. I'm hoping I can go in a different two-wheel direction. I want to discover more of the world and I feel a deep connection to these old bikes. They are so soulful and give this feeling of complete freedom. I would love to be able to use the name I made in motocross to help but I think what went into this is more than getting to a track and competition – it is about a lifestyle and seeing different things and having an adventure."

**DBR:** Will your future in this field be about luck and having clients fall into place or is there room for a shrewd business plan?

**BM:** "If I'm honest I haven't thought about a shrewd business plan. I'm just seeing if people like what I produce. I got a good response from the little one I did in Australia [in Byron Bay] – which was my first – and I probably won't sell it because I like it that much!"

"It is all a learning process for me at the moment. I'd like to generate some interest in this bike and start a little portfolio and then use what I have done and my background to maybe travel around for a while and do some other projects. If it does start taking off then of course I'll begin looking at a business model. It would be nice to get the work recognised and I know it will take time but I am prepared for that."

**DBR:** Tricky question – you're 31 now. Have you thought much about your legacy as a racer and what people thought of you in your pomp? And whether you bring any of that into your design work?

**BM:** "Legacy" ...right. That is a tricky one. I guess it would be mixed. I think for people that liked my style they could see I was quite technical and smooth – especially when I got to Australia because I took that a step forward and became more confident. In the UK I guess they still remember an aggressive and fiery racer! There are two different styles that I suppose people could connect with. I think my last two years in Australia were quite injury free and calculated. Although I did not get that championship I was still winning races and got close to it. I was happy and riding was coming more naturally. Overall I've grown up a little bit and I have a keener and sharper eye for things. I'm not so grungy and crazy like I was in the UK – if that makes sense."

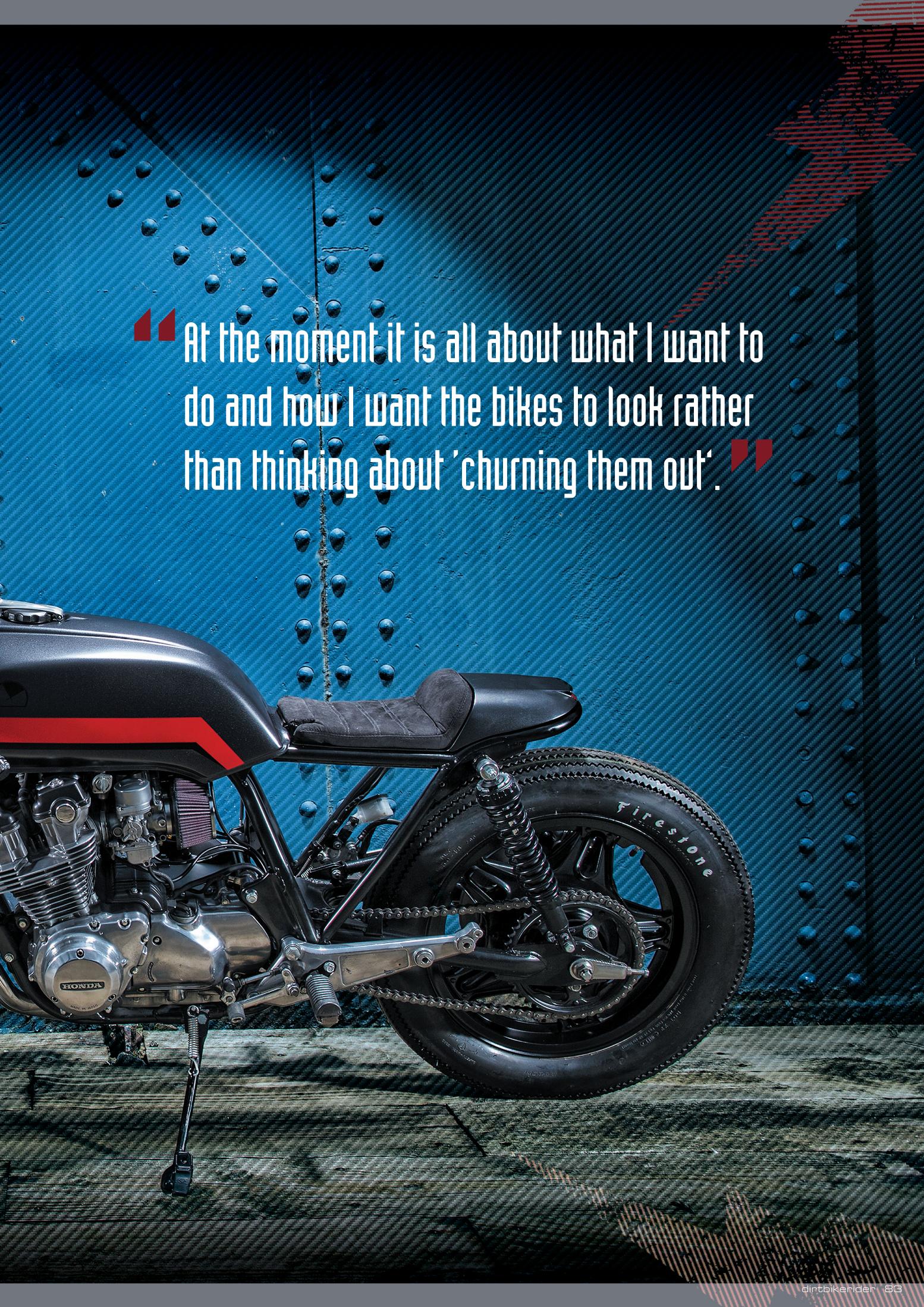
**DBR:** So what about riding? You made a British Championship appearance at the end of the season. Are you keeping yourself trim and ready for another chance if it arises?

**BM:** "I'm heading back to Australia at Christmas and my brother is getting married in March. I've really enjoyed this last year and I needed it – a refreshed attitude. I'll be in Australia to train again and escape the winter here. It is a luxury rather than a chore to train there. I'll get myself back in shape and if someone has a bike lying around then I'll take a shot."

"If someone offered me the chance to race again I'd seriously consider it. You see people like Dan Reardon coming back and winning the supercross championship after taking a few years out. I still think I've got what it takes to run top three in any domestic championship. If it was an opportunity that would be fun and if things fell into the right places then I definitely wouldn't turn it down."

"When I came back for the British Championship it was more about seeing everyone and seeing what the bike was like. I hadn't raced for over a year and definitely wasn't fit enough! But I liked being in the pits and the energy of the British Championship that was different to when I left with an improvement in the tracks. We'll see where the road takes me."





“At the moment it is all about what I want to do and how I want the bikes to look rather than thinking about ‘churning them out’.”

# Shoc to thrill



MIKEY NEALE IS ONE OF THE LEADING VIDEOGRAPHERS IN THE OFF-ROAD MOTORCYCLING INDUSTRY...

Words by **Jeff Perrett** Images by **Nuno Laranjeira**

**M**ikey Neale's skills on a motocross bike were never gonna pay the bills but his ability to film motocross is another matter. After just a few short years in the business Mikey is considered to be one of the best videographers around and earlier this year launched his first full feature.

An amiable chap from the valleys of South Wales, like many from that part of the world Mikey isn't shy when it comes to having a good time but that doesn't mean he's not driven and focused. He's one of the hardest working guys in the industry, no question, although it's an industry that he didn't necessarily set out to be in..

#### Let's dive straight in – why videography?

"The passion for motocross came before the passion for videography. It all started as a result of being a massive fan of the sport and wanting to capture my experience of the events I was at. I'd go to the GPs or other big events with my mates and the camera started to come along. Now it's come to a point where my passion for videography almost matches my passion for the

sport – it's just kind of grown really.

"I've always been big on self improvement and learning and trying to better myself in anything that I do. As long as I'm learning my mind is always focused. I've found over the years in the sports that I've done or anything really, if I can't progress anymore due to ability, injury, whatever, then I lose interest.

"I think with videography you never stop learning or improving, there's always a shot that you could've done better and technology is always improving and changing and that makes it interesting. There's always better events, better riders, better light, things like that which keep it interesting. That's why my passion for it continues to grow."

#### How did your motocross journey begin?

"Similar to many others I'm sure. I think I was four at the time, I woke up one Christmas morning and my parents did the usual 'oh we haven't got you much this year' type of thing and then said let's go outside – out in the porch was a little 50. I was straight on it up the street and in no time had my first crash, straight into one of the neighbour's cars. >>



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I took a bit of skin off my knee, got back up and just kept riding it all day. I loved it right from the start. "I rode a lot as a kid but my parents were real hard workers and we didn't really get a chance to go racing because they were always so busy. As a kid I was pretty much left to my own devices. I wouldn't say I was lawless but I used to take my bike up the mountain, push it down to the fuel station, fill it up with my pocket money and just ride about all day. So although I was never racing I was always riding.

"When I was at university I bought a new motocross bike with my last student loan and because I had my own means of transport I could get myself to the races so that's when I really started racing. I remember the first time I went to race. I decided to drill a hole through the boot of my car and attached to the trailer that way because I had no tow hitch. By the time I'd got to the end of my street the trailer had ripped through the boot of my car, so I never actually made it to the race."

#### At what point did you start filming motocross?

"I was just still racing and loving that really and then we started going to a few bigger races as fans and that's when I bought a camera and started filming.

"I'd always enjoyed capturing moments and then I got into the editing process and creativity of it – everything about it including choosing the music. I mean that alone is a huge thing for me, I've always been big into music anyway so to be able to put your own stamp onto something you see is very rewarding. The whole process was new and exciting to me because I was never really creative up until that point." >>



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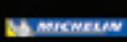
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**How did it get to the point where you started getting commissioned shoots?**

"It was around the time that YouTube and Facebook were really starting to become more popular. I was going to events with friends like I said and just making the best edits I could and putting them up on social media – more for myself than anyone else really. If people enjoyed them too then that was great.

"A media group then saw them and asked me to start producing stuff for them and that's how it really all started. I then thought 'well, maybe I should give this a proper go' so I got on eBay and found myself a professional camera that I could afford, went out, took a chance and just really started working hard at it."

**So, you're just starting out as a professional, was there anyone in particular who was inspirational?**

"When I was big into bikes I started to watch the early Terra firma films and never really stopped if I'm honest. I remember watching Terra firma 2 and those opening sequences with McGrath and just being blown away – I must've watched that section alone well over a hundred times. Then when I saw the 'Great Outdoors' video that's when I thought 'now that's how motocross should be captured'.

"Troy Adamitis – the guy who did those films and the recent 'Behind the Dream' series from supercross – is the best story teller in the business and someone I have always looked up to and been inspired by. Since working in the industry I've actually ended up becoming friends with Troy – it's amazing. Working with Troy and Alex Rankin – who was a huge help to me when I first started – as well as Taylor >>



Congdon on the recent Moto series has been a little surreal. When I first picked up the camera if you had said to me I would be working with those names I would've said 'stop talking bollocks'."

**At the level you're at most jobs has a brief – predominantly to focus on the rider. How receptive are the riders to your ideas? I'm guessing it's a lot different now to when you started out?**

"It has definitely become easier. Naturally the more you work with people the more you build an understanding. The riders I've worked with a number of times in the past, they know I'm not going to make them look bad, I only want to make them look good and they know I'm going to put my heart and soul into it and put in as much effort as they're going to put into the shoot.

"Saying that you do get the odd rider that no matter how hard you work, or try to build a relationship they just don't want to be

shooting videos, they only want to race and twist the throttle. Some riders are just so driven or being the best that shooting a video is a distraction for them.

"I was speaking to Ryan Villopoto just last week and he said to me straight 'I hate shooting video'. I admired his honesty and his professionalism because even though he said that he got on with the job and did everything I asked of him. I remember talking to his brother Tyler and he said that Ryan was never interested in play riding – it's just always been about winning races for him.

"I have to be honest, the majority of riders I have to work with have been very good to me and accommodating though.

"I've forged a good relationship with a lot of them and regard them as friends."

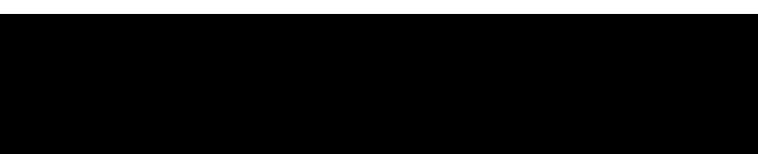
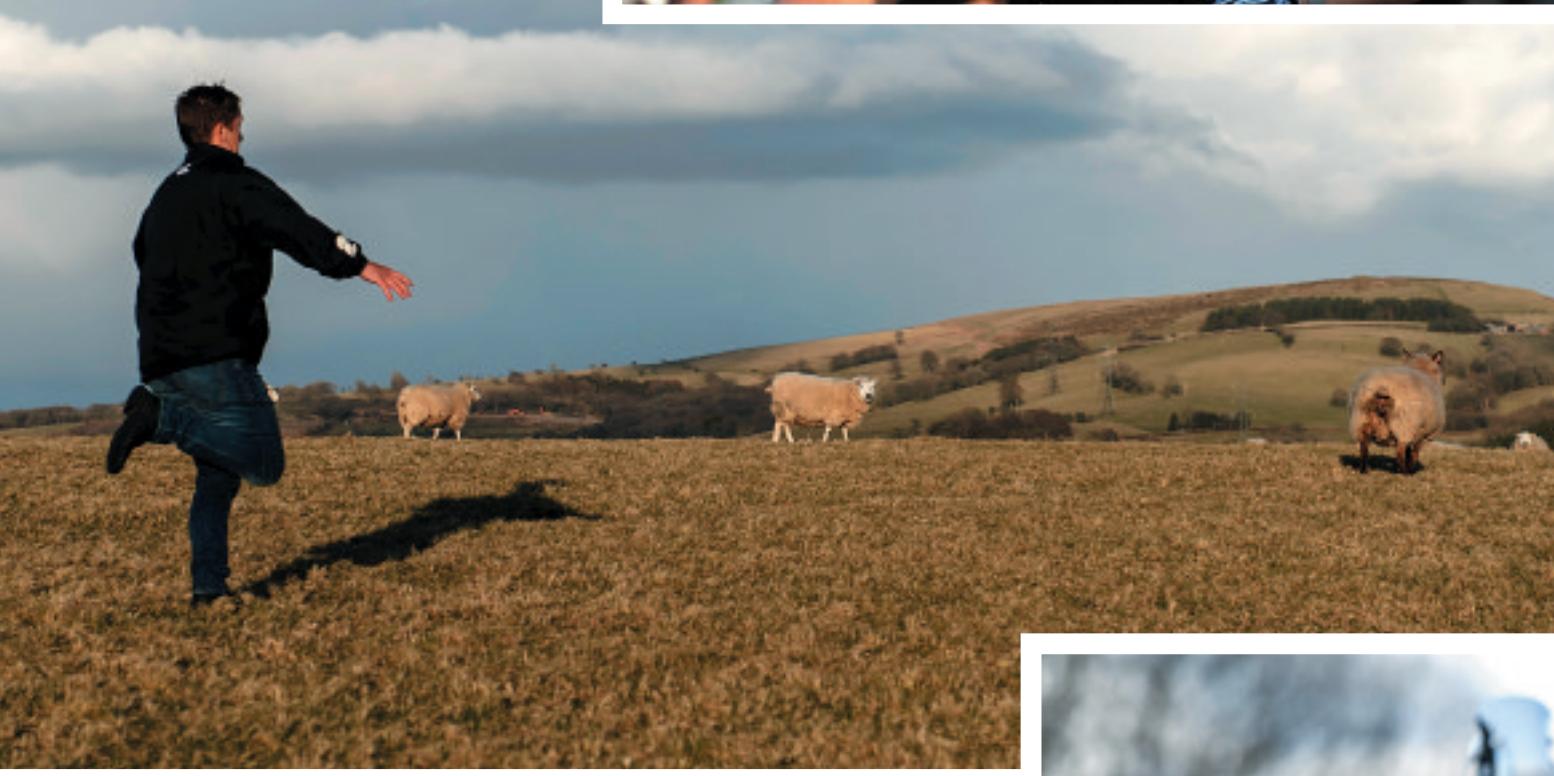
**Do you have a favourite rider?**

"The one that has always stood out for me is Zach Osborne. Whatever frame you shoot of Zach you can tell he's trying and giving 100 per

cent. With Zach there's so much going on and he's either hanging right off the back, or the side, and hitting the throttle so hard that roost is flying everywhere – he's just so much fun to shoot. Not only that he's a great guy and easy to work with. I've done some of my favourite shoots with him."

**Do you have a favourite segment that you've shot?**

"There are two that I really like looking back on – so I guess they're my favourites. One is not from a great technical point of view because I was still an amateur and doing it for fun and that was with Billy Mackenzie down at Bordon army camp. I used a track from the Kings of Leon that I was really into and there was something about that edit at the time that made me think 'I might be able to make a career out of this'. So I look back on that one fondly because it gave me the motivation to push on – almost like a breakthrough race I suppose and it's also an amazing place to shoot.



"The other one is the Zach Osborne segment in Moto 4 – a lot of people always comment on that. When I was filming it I did get a couple of shots where I thought 'that was awesome' but going back to what we said earlier location can play a big part and Zach is so aggressive on a bike too. The location was just so good, a white sand track cut through dark green trees in the middle of a forest in Norway. I mean, no matter who is behind the camera you can't really go wrong with an environment like that."

**You've decided to truly do your own independent film – Fear Not. What's the real driving force behind that decision?**

"I don't think anyone starts off making a motocross film just purely for financial gain because it's tough to do that. Like why many people start riding or start a race team – it's passion driven. Obviously I would like the film to be a financial success and at worse wash its face financially but that's not why I'm doing it.

"My aim is to show the sport I love so much

in the way I feel it should be shown – it's my expression. Not just the sport but the riders. A lot of the riders in the film I really think a lot of, personally and from a riding perspective and I just want to show those guys in the best possible light.

"Because this is my film and to an extent because I control what goes into it I can make it more my style and how I want it rather than how someone else wants it. Although it's always something I wanted to do I still feel there is loads more I can do so maybe, I hope, it's the first of many. Future films can then be bigger and better with more production values if this one is received well.

"This film for me is a step in the right direction just to show what I can do in a feature length film with no real restrictions. I haven't actively gone out and looked for sponsors on this one because I wanted to come in under the radar a little bit and for people to see it, like it and then develop an interest on working on something bigger in the future."





# GOOPS' TROOPS!



After going it alone with Elliott Banks-Browne in 2015, Rob Hooper's back this year with a four-man team mounted on Yamaha machinery . . .

Words by Jeff Perrett Photos by Ray Archer

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**R**ob Hooper has certainly played his part in the history of British motocross. A successful GP rider turned team manager, Rob has been involved in the sport for the best part of his life.

After a forced sabbatical a while ago he's back in the game and once again he's got a good hand.

For someone to have the longevity that Rob has had in our sport you have to really love it. Clearly he does and under that cool, calm exterior he's very passionate about motocross.

There's not much that Rob hasn't seen down the years. There have been obvious highs – like winning British titles – and then the lows – like not being able to find the resources to run a team. From those darker days in recent times Rob and his new-look team have risen back up and, armed with a new lease of life, it looks like a team under Rob Hooper's management is once again going to be a strong force in British motocross.

Good for the sport and great for Rob – he's earned it...

**DBR:** It seems like you were out of the game for a few years but it was actually only one year. Did it seem longer to you?

**RH:** "No, not really – but I certainly missed it and that's why it was great to come back with the Geartec Suzuki team these past two years. It was getting harder to put a team together and we were assured of the money to run but it all just fell apart and I just couldn't continue with a team at that stage. Thankfully, Paul Mason from Geartec has now got involved and I'm back doing a job I love."

**DBR:** It's fair to say you've been around the block and you understand the industry. How hard do you find it these days in justifying even running a British MX team?

**RH:** "It's very hard, more than people outside of doing it actually know. There's so little from within the industry to run a team these days – whether it's the manufacturers or the associated wholesalers and importers. The cost of running a team is astronomical from when I was a racer.

"Then someone gave you some bikes, a good few parts and a bit of money and you'd have a friend or a parent who was your mechanic. Now it's a whole entourage of people that need paying and more money spent on equipment and presentation than ever before – the big awnings, the trucks. It's just got bigger and supposedly more professional but it's mostly being done for the love of the sport."

**DBR:** Well that answers what was going to be my next question. You obviously do it and put yourself through the stresses of it because you love it but surely you must have had times when you've fallen out of love with it?

**RH:** "Yes, I guess – but never that much or I wouldn't be talking to you now. It's all I know. I've either been a rider or a team manager since I was 20 years old and to walk away from it would be almost impossible for me.

"I still love the sport, I still like to see bikes being ridden well, I still like to prepare bikes. Yeah, I could go off and do something else but it wouldn't be the life I love or want to live. I'm sure everyone in this sport has a moment or two where they're over it for a bit – a bad day at a race or injuries or just a bad run can drag you

down but I think, like many do, once you start this sport it gets hold of you like no other.

"The atmosphere, the people, the dedication and enjoyment everyone gets out if it is hard to match. For me the idea of doing a normal job doesn't stay there very long."

**DBR:** So it's fair to say you're glad to be back after your little hiatus a while ago then?

**RH:** "Definitely. I'm fortunate to do something I love and I have to say Paul at Geartec is an absolute diamond. We actually met many moons ago when he and his mate Kev came to my training school. It was over two days and they couldn't afford to both do the two days so one came one day, the other the next and now here we are years later and he's the guy that's basically paying for my team to happen."

**DBR:** It goes back to my question about how the industry has changed doesn't it. The bottom line is that if Paul hadn't stepped in you may still have been out in the cold regarding running a motocross team?

**RH:** "Yes, that may well have been the case. The sport needs outside financial support more than ever I think. When I finished racing and went to Suzuki GB and ran the team things were very different. It was more their team and I was paid to manage and run it for them. We were working on in-house budgets that paid for everything – there were no outside sponsors as such.

"You could almost say they were lackadaisical in that they didn't even look for funding from associated sponsors to help it along, let alone outside of the core" >>

Micky Eccles will race in MX2 for the Geartec Yamaha team



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industry. They just made a budget and paid for everything – the riders, the spares, the mechanics, everything – so that goes to show how much it's changed.

"It changed in 1991 when I got called into the office and was told that they were dispensing with in-house race teams and I was given the opportunity to run it on a contract, which of course I took them up on. It was the same across the board in the early '90s and that's when teams like Colin Reed's RWJ, myself and others were then running the manufacturers' programmes but having to source the finances to do it."

"In 1989 we had a budget of around £250,000 from Suzuki to run a team, now it's hard just to get bikes and spares – even £250 – from manufacturers, so things have changed dramatically. But it is what it is so if you love doing it you've just got to find a way to do it."

**DBR:** You've been synonymous with Suzuki for so long in your career – pretty much for as long as I can remember and I've been around a while too! So I'm guessing the reason for your 2016 switch to Yamaha is based on what you've just said...

**RH:** "The reason for the change was for a various number of reasons. Let's say while my teams have been predominately run by me in the past the current situation is that it's no longer solely my decision. It's between me, Paul and to a degree Elliott has been involved

*Elliott Banks-Browne plays a huge part in the team both on and off the track*



*Lewis Toombs will be looking for a solid season in 2016*



in the decision.

"He was already signed to ride for the Geartec team for 2016. I had a conversation with Yamaha which at the time wasn't with a view to running a race team with them but it just evolved from there. It was good timing with Steve Dixon moving to Kawasaki and Roy Emberson calling it day on running a pro team – both of which had done an excellent job for so many years – so it meant that Yamaha were left with a decision to make.

"Thankfully they were keen to work with us. It wasn't a decision made lightly for us to switch manufacturers, that's for sure. We discussed it, tested the bikes and here we are, working hard on doing the best job we can for Yamaha, all our sponsorship partners and, of course, ourselves."

**DBR:** You've put together a bunch of British talent too so you must be happy with the way the Geartec team has grown even from last year?

**RH:** "Yes, I'm very pleased with how it's all worked out. We wanted a second rider to join Elliott and we wanted Ashley Wilde so I'm very happy that all worked out. Obviously, we had our injury issues with Elliott last year but I won't dwell on that because it's still a very sore subject with me – once Elliott broke his leg we were left with nothing and we didn't have anyone on track until the end of June so we didn't want that happening again."

"Also, the availability was there to run a second rider for 2016 so it made perfect sense, in fact it's a necessity really if you're going to do the job properly. With the investment in money and time into the team you can't afford not to" **>>**

have a rider out on track throughout a season.

"The MX2 side of it came about when we made the switch to Yamaha. Howard Tombs [Lewis' dad] had a long association with Steve Dixon and Yamaha and Lewis liked the bike so we started talking. Yamaha then asked us if they could have some MX2 involvement so we then looked at that. Originally it wasn't on our radar because Suzuki only wanted to support an MX1 team.

"So we agreed a deal with Lewis and then the opportunity came along to also work with Michael Eccles so it made sense to have a two-man team in each class and really take the team forward."

**DBR:** You've worked with Elliott for over a year now – what's it like to work with the grandson of a rider you used to race? Does that make you feel old?

**RH:** "I don't need that to make me feel old, my body tells me that! Elliott is a super talent and motocross is so important to his life. I suppose

you could say he's involved with everything we do, he offers his opinion on everything we do as team and it's a big help when you have a rider that enthusiastic about what's good for him but also the team's interest in general. I have a lot of respect for his position and I'd like to think he has for our position too, in fact I know he has.

"Elliott knows the trends. I'd probably still have the lads dressed as though it was the 1970s but he gives feedback on what looks right and what doesn't. He helps out a lot with the team image and he's very good with social media. I can still barely send an email! He's right on it.

"He's been surround by knowledge of the sport his whole life on all levels – it's just the norm for him, he's been absorbing that since a toddler.

"I used to race against his grandfather, John. Everything laps over. John was coming to end of his career when I was just starting out really and then his son Mark started racing British championships when I was coming to the end

of my career. I've known the family for a long time and that has helped in working with Elliott. His direct family have known me for a long time and so I think that reassures Elliott too."

**DBR:** You've also entered a team for the Monster Energy Arenacross Tour so you really are back in full force and going for it!

**RH:** "Yes, again it just kind of evolved really. We ended up having a meeting with Matt Bates and in no time at all really we've put a team into that. Matt signed Cedric Souleyras up to the series and at the point of when that was happening Cedric had to be on a Yamaha. I'd already spoken to Matt and we were definitely going to be involved – even if we had stayed with Suzuki. Once we switched to Yamaha we felt there was not enough time for us to have everything ready for Elliott and find a second rider so at that point we weren't going to be doing it.

"Matt was disappointed but understood our position but then a few weeks later he came

After a stellar season in 2015 Ash Wilde was at the top of Rob's shopping list for this season

EBB, Geartec head honcho Paul Mason, Rob and Ash will be hunting MX1 titles in 2016



back to us with the Soubeyras and Jake Vella situation and we took it from there. After the first round last weekend it's working very well for us, both riders are easy to work with and of course Cedric can challenge for the title.

"It's all come good – we have a four-man British MX team and a two-man arenacross team. It certainly keeps us on our toes!"

"Elliott would like to be involved in the arenacross again and maybe he will be, it's just that the switch of bikes was too close to the start of the series for him. I don't feel that arenacross is any more dangerous than any other form of riding. What happened to Elliott last year should have never happened either indoors or outdoors."

**DBR:** With the team already going up a considerable notch from last year what kind of expectations does that bring?

**RH:** "There's a lot of talent in all the championships and classes we are racing so you have to be respectful of that.

Championships are not easy to win, if they were then we wouldn't be putting in the hours that we do.

"The Maxxis British championship is going to be tougher than it has been in recent years in my opinion. There's a lot of talent in there. Established GP riders in Shaun [Simpson] and Tommy [Searle], then you've got Steven Lenoir who was very impressive in MX2 moving up, Tanel Leok, the Buildbase Honda team and more I could mention.

"So we go into it with our own expectations. The riders have theirs and their goals to reach and as team management we have a target where we'd like to see them end up. I think we have two riders that can both finish in the top six in the championship if all goes well – I'm not going to be any more adventurous than that.

"Elliott has won British championships so he's had that experience. Of course, he's going to have to step up his level more to race with Shaun and Tommy who have the speed coming from riding GPs regularly but it's not impossible

to beat them and win races. At the beginning of 2015 nobody expected Romain Febvre to achieve what he did last year.

"I see some riders who I believe sometimes set outlandish and unrealistic expectations, we've got enough experience in our team not to do that. Having said that, winning races and being consistent is not out of our realm either."

**DBR:** It all sounds exciting Rob and it genuinely seems like you're recharged for the same challenge but with a new drive and incentive...

**RH:** "Definitely! It's every waking moment and probably some moments in my sleep too. Over the years I've seen numerous teams come and go and their expectations of what they should be getting back from the manufacturers and industry are so outrageous that they're doomed almost from the beginning.

"I'm thankful to have lasted this long and with continued support from good people like Paul and the team we have hopefully I'll be around for a lot longer yet."



# THIS IS E



# ENGLAND!

Scrambling legend  
Ivor England to be exact...

Words by Andy Westlake





Ivor leads Derek Rickman at a dusty Hankom Bottom

**A**knowledgeable crowd converged on Bulbarrow Hill in March, 1963 keen to see whether the Rickman brothers would wheel out their new Mark III Metisse or if Ivor England could add to his tally of five Southern Centre championship wins. After a winter spent trials riding to keep fit Ivor was keen to renew his battles with the rest of the centre's top names and he was also mounted on a new bike – a 500cc Triumph Metisse.

Wearing his usual number 75 he soon gave intent that he was not about to relinquish his title lightly and with his fans urging him on became embroiled in a titanic struggle for the lead with Triss Sharp and Don Rickman. With flying mud peppering the crowded hillside the trio frequently swapped places but the younger Rickman was in scintillating form and eventually ran out a comfortable winner from Ivor with Triss a close third.

On that spring day in '63 the bumper crowd were lucky enough to witness at first hand Ivor's fast yet seemingly effortless riding style. In a 14 year career which saw him win eight southern centre stars Ivor was undoubtedly one of the best and also one of the most popular riders of

his era although both then and now he is still extremely modest about his achievements.

To find out a little more I visited his home in the beautiful New Forest where he lived with Audrey, his wife of nearly 50 years and I started by asking him about his early days. As he revealed motorcycling was not met with wholesale parental approval.

"My first road bike was a two stroke GTP Velocette which I bought at age 16 and then hid in the shed hoping that it would go 'unnoticed'. Of course it was soon discovered and there was a terrible uproar when my dad found out. What he didn't know was that prior to buying the Velo' I'd already had another bike which I kept and rode on the farm where I worked after school".

Uproar or not Ivor kept the little GTP and it wasn't long before the machine control he'd learned sliding around the fields was put to good use in his first scramble although he could have easily become a speedway rider instead.

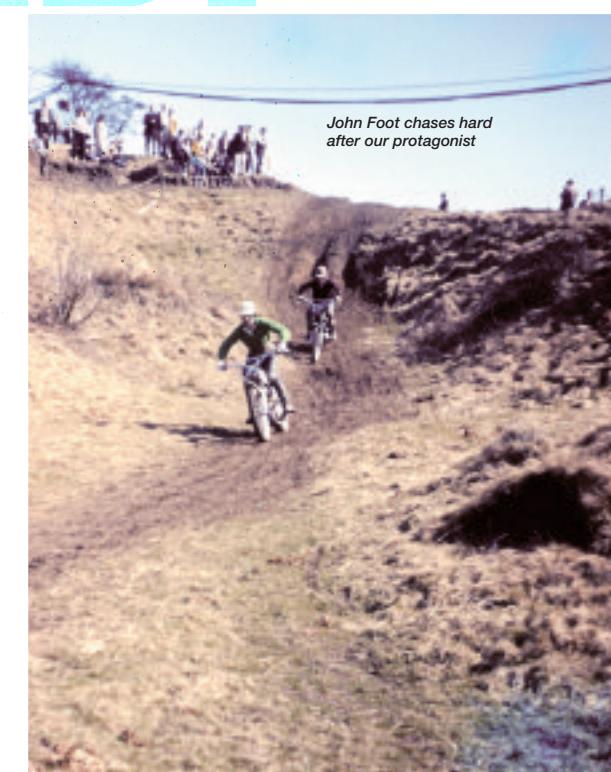
"Speedway was my first love and every week I used to attend the meetings at nearby Poole. I really fancied a go and thought my prayers were answered when I saw an advert announcing that trials for budding shingle stars were going to be held at Matchams Park.

I turned up but unfortunately so did scores of other hopefuls which made it impossible for everyone to get a ride therefore I turned my attentions to scrambling."

Speedway's loss would turn out to be scrambling's gain although as he lined up for his debut race at East Meon in 1955 little could he have imagined that three years later he would be Southern centre champion.

His first 'scrambler' was in fact a 350cc BSA trials bike which he bought from Percy Small motorcycles in Southampton – it had a rigid rear end and the only concession to scrambling was the fitment of a pair of knobbly tyres. He was raring to go but unlike many of his contemporaries who had to ride their bikes to the events, race and ride home again Ivor managed to travel in style.

Audrey had just started work as a mobile hairdresser – a common enough occupation now but in the middle of the 1950s something virtually unheard of especially in rural Hampshire. Such was its novelty value Ivor's then fiancé and her sporty little MG featured in a period magazine article on the new venture. Perhaps not the ideal car to change out of muddy riding gear after a day's racing but with the bike secured onto a home-brewed trailer



John Foot chases hard after our protagonist



Ivor edges ahead of Terry Cox at Glastonbury in 1964



Ivor and Ron Baines receive the Inter Centre trophy in 1960

one which solved Ivor's transport problem. Audrey still visited some of her original clients 50 years on although sadly the car was long gone!

As Ivor readily admits he didn't set the world on fire in that first season but his smooth riding style was soon getting him noticed and 18 months later he notched up his first win on a 500cc Gold Star. The Goldie also taught him a lot about the mechanical side of things.

"The bike had previously been raced by Don Rickman but for some reason the engine had been stripped and was in a box. Harold Wakefield told me that I could have it but first I would need to rebuild the motor."

Wakefield was sponsor, mentor and friend to the Rickman family and undoubtedly a man of considerable means but is remembered warmly by Ivor for his great enthusiasm and generosity – especially towards those riders representing the Southern team at the hotly contested inter centre events.

Throughout his career Ivor was usually racing one bike while either buying or building another and with his reputation gathering force he was soon on a works specification Gold Star.

"At that time it was extremely difficult to just go out and buy a new Gold Star scrambler

so I saw Brian Martin at BSA who agreed to supply me with one through my local agent Stocker and Shepherd. It featured alloy petrol and central oil tanks and was as near to works specification as you could get but I still had to pay a whopping £303 for it – this was a lot of money in the late '50s."

It was on this Gold Star that he scooped the first of his eight Southern Centre championships and although BSA might have lapped up the reflected glory there was never anything in the way of works support for the Hampshire rider. Despite his 14 highly successful seasons the factory rides always just eluded him and it wasn't just Small Heath who missed out on his talents.

"BSA's had their full quota of riders so I tried AJS but had no joy as they only seemed interested in riders who lived within a short travelling distance of the factory"

It's disappointing to think that Ivor was refused the chance of a works bike not because of his riding abilities but because he lived in the 'wilds' of Hampshire.

Like many of his contemporaries Ivor soon joined those travelling to the lucrative meetings on the continent although for a man used to hurtling around on a 350lb Goldie his debut on

foreign soil was made on a very different sort of machine.

"If you got a top three position at a national meeting you automatically qualified for an international license and I got mine after I picked up a third at the Hants Grand National at Matchams Park. Dennis Kelly used to race a lot on the continent and had an entry for a meeting in France but as he was recovering from a broken arm asked me if I would like to travel with him and take over the ride on his Tiger Cub.

"This was ideal as it meant he could show me the ropes, introduce me to people and I could get a feel for things. I can't remember much about the actual race other than I didn't get on very well with the little Triumph but I do recall that we came home not only with the shared start money but also several rolls of carpet supplied by some local French firms who sponsored the event."

This started Ivor and Audrey on regular trips to mainland Europe and during his career he raced in France, Germany, Belgium, Switzerland and Spain often in the company of fellow Brit's Ken Heanes, John Clayton, Frank Underwood and the Rickman brothers.

For the Englands it was very much a team >>



Taking a BSA for an airing  
at Beenham Park



# THIS IS ENGLAND!

effort and Ivor was quick to point out the huge support and encouragement he's received from Audrey. "Throughout my career Audrey dealt with all of the entries, ferries and hotel bookings – all I had to do was ride the bike," says Ivor with a smile.

These continental meetings paid well but invariably involved a lot of travelling and for Ivor a long dash back home for Monday morning and work on the farm. Scrambling was hugely popular both at home and abroad and on the back of the good start and prize money to be earned several of his fellow Brit's turned professional – although for Ivor racing was first and foremost something he did because he enjoyed it. By the late '50s the Spanish were getting into the burgeoning sport of motocross and along with Don Rickman Ivor was invited to the Ossa works in Barcelona.

"Through the ACU Ossa had asked for a couple of riders to go out to Spain and help develop their bike ahead of the Spanish GP. Harold Taylor had organised Don and Derek Rickman to go but Derek was nursing an injury so he invited me to take his place. Harold, Don and I were flown from Gatwick to Barcelona where we were treated extremely hospitably by the Ossa people. We tested the bikes on their track and gave them feedback on any alterations and modifications that were required especially regarding things like the position of the footrests and handlebars. At the end of the

week we raced them in the GP which was held at an old golf course and lined by thousands of cheering enthusiastic Spaniards."

Ivor's success became synonymous with booming 500cc four-strokes – Gold Stars, TriBSAs and later on Triumph powered Metisse machines but the Ossa was not his only association with ring-dinging two strokes.

"I raced a Dot for a while without any great success and then I was asked to ride a Greeves for Sid Lawton in the Moto-Rodeo. Speedway had gone a bit flat so the promoter Charlie Knott came up with the idea of a series of arena races in Southampton. He attracted some good riders who were nearly all on lightweight machines, many of which were supplied through dealers who fettled and tuned them between meetings. It paid well and I was getting as much racing there once a week as I did for three weeks work on the farm."

Knott's events were a lot of fun for the riders but only of novelty value to the spectators and fizzled out after a season or so, although on reflection they were probably too much ahead of their time.

Held at the popular Leighton circuit the Frome club's August Bank Holiday Rob Walker trophy meeting was always a keenly contested affair and for Ivor a happy hunting ground. The undulating course at Heal's ladder was undoubtedly one of his favourites and following his third successive win over John Clayton in

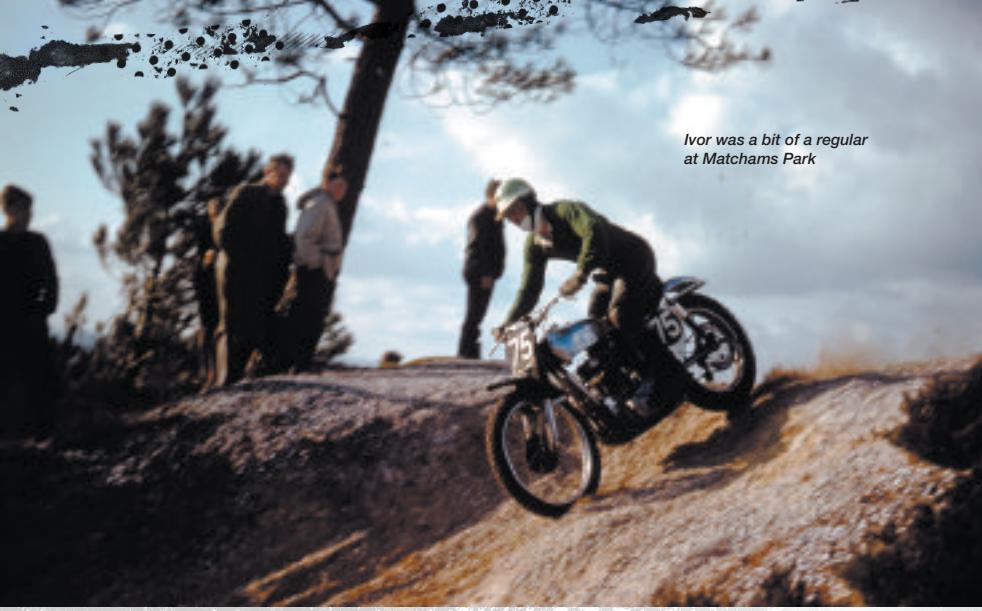
1960 he retained the much prized silverware along with an extra £20 that was presented by its donor the former Formula One race team owner Rob Walker. It now takes pride of place in Ivor's impressive trophy cabinet.

While many of his rivals displayed an on the edge riding style of leaps and wheelies which resulted in the almost predictable crash #75 was definitely Mr Smooth and an England tumble was a rare sight. 14 years of racing brought the inevitable cuts and bruises but an incident sustained while leading the Pirbright 100 miler was perhaps his worst injury and it also left a 'nasty taste in his mouth'.

"As you can imagine racing for that length of time was incredibly tiring and called for good back up for refreshments, refuelling and the like. I pulled up to take on petrol and have a drink but ended up with a mouthful of undiluted orange as someone had forgotten to mix it with water – it tasted ghastly.

"I was going really well and in the lead but in the muddy conditions racing (and lap scoring) soon became chaotic and picking your way past riders flagging with fatigue was extremely difficult. I went to overtake a backmarker but he didn't see me coming and we collided in a tangle of legs and footrests which had me off; my race ended with a visit to the medic's tent with badly mangled leg."

Other incidents however had a happier conclusion and Audrey recalled one from the



Ivor was a bit of a regular at Matchams Park



quaintly name Grandfather's Bottom involving the late Phil Nex.

"The track at Grandfather's Bottom featured some deep hollows followed by an amazingly steep hill which led onto the start and finish straight. It was a very foggy day and I was waiting at the pit fence when a very concerned Phil rode out of the race to tell me that he thought he'd ridden over Ivor in one of the hollows," says Audrey. "In fact we soon discovered that Ivor had broken down and when the race ended both him and the dead Gold star eventually appeared at the end of long tow rope hauled by a gang of about a dozen willing helpers. I think Phil was in the lead at the time but it was a typical gesture of the man – a true sportsman".

From the late '50s onward Ivor competed in virtually all of the British National events regularly picking up championship points for his efforts – usually mounted on machines he'd constructed himself. The Goldie had been pensioned off and replaced by a variety of TriBSAs and later on a Metisse which befitting a championship contender was towed to meetings the length and breadth of the country behind a 3.8 litre Jaguar. The TriBSAs went through a steady series of improvements before eventually evolving into the seriously competitive machine he campaigned in the early '60s.

"I loved the power delivery of the pre-unit Triumph twin engine but the standard Meriden frame was pretty awful so the trick was to use one from a BSA. I also used a BSA gearbox fitted with a longer main shaft to marry up with a Norton clutch which didn't slip like those on the BSA. The forks were Norton roadholders but during the course of a race they would lose there damping so in the days before specialist products we filled them with oil which was so thick it was more like treacle.

"The engine oil also used to get extremely hot making the pump stick with catastrophic results so I started to experiment with an oil carrying frame. I took the Beezer frame to a company in Bournemouth who blew it through with a high pressure jet which removed all of the left over swarf and muck. The end result was that the motor ran much cooler and I had a lot less in the way of engine rebuilds to contend with.

"The Rickman's used a similar idea in the Metisse but this had an added advantage in that it was made of bigger gauge tubing which was less prone to cracking and breakages."

On his home brewed machine Ivor was a member of the team comprising of Don and Derek Rickman, Triss Sharp and Ken Heanes which scooped the inter centre team championship in 1962. He was often at the end of Micky taking and banter regarding his good looks and as they lined up for the winning team photograph a fellow member was heard to quip



Derek Rickman chases hard at Bulbarrow Hill



Soaring high at Frome in 1962



– 'Ivor should keep his helmet on 'cos he's too handsome when he takes it off'.

With little doubt the Rickman Metisse was the best 'over the counter' scrambles bike of its day and the machine which Ivor would race from '63 until his retirement five years later. By then, courtesy of the hugely popular TV scrambles his name had spread to a wider audience and there were few events where the name of England didn't figure in the results. These have been carefully documented in a series of bulging scrapbooks that frequently show reports of three starts and three wins for Ivor England – reports modestly referred to by Ivor as "not a bad day".

Undoubtedly this modestly added to his friendly, approachable nature and 'never say die' attitude made him one of the Southern crowd's favourites. Lifelong friendships were made from people who came along to say hello in the pits including Jill and Cyril Harris who the England's met at Beenham Park in the early '60s. They were later godparents to son Nick who would be the next motorcycle star in the England household.

After learning the ropes around the family's garden on a mini 50cc Suzuki Metisse Nick went on to become one of the Southern Centre's best trials riders. During the 1980s he rode both works Fantic and Shurt Yamahas to great effect and the name of England once more appeared as Southern Centre champion. |



# DIRTY BUSINESS!

HOW CALIFORNIAN RACER MICHAEL LEIB IS  
MAKING A LIVING FROM MOTOCROSS BOTH  
ON AND OFF THE TRACK...

Words and photos by **Max Hind**

*Sick scrubs and creating killer duds is every day business for Michael Leib*



guess most of you reading this magazine won't have heard of Canvas MX before although I bet loads of you have already seen their products. If you've watched Robbie Madison's Pipe Dream then you definitely have...

Canvas MX is the brainchild of Michael Leib – former GP racer and current AMA SX star. Only 24, Michael has squeezed a lot into his short career and after spending some time with him in his native Southern California we can assure you that there's still plenty more to be written about in the Michael Leib story.

If you drop by [canvasmx.com](http://canvasmx.com) online you'll immediately be hit by the company's tag line – brand yourself. As a privateer he wanted to give more back to his personal sponsors so why would he wear gear promoting the manufacturer's name in the prime advertising space? Especially when he could sell that space to other sponsors...

Michael has since acted on those initial thoughts and has sourced quality gear in plain black or white – or a mixture of the two – that you can go online and brand with your own logos. You can choose to have these logos

added either by heat transfer (which won't last forever) or dye sublimation which takes a bit longer but will stand the test of time. It's a simple idea but one that's full of promise.

Michael has already got superstars like Robbie Madison, Nate Adams and Taka Higashino embracing his creation. It really is exciting times for Canvas MX, Michael Leib and the privateer population of the globe as they now have the opportunity to promote themselves, their sponsors and perhaps make a little extra wonga... all while looking pretty damn dope in a fresh set of kit.

We hooked up with Michael at Pala Raceway recently and talked about Canvas, his career and what the future may hold for the likable Californian....

**DBR:** So Michael give us a brief rundown of your career, how you started and your career highlights to date...

**ML:** "My career started back in 1999. I did the whole amateur thing and coming up I won a few amateur titles. I won on the 65s but I had some dry spells on the 85s – I always moved up as early as I could so I was always the little guy on

the bigger bike. I ended up winning at Loretta Lynn's in 2009 and then I went to Europe and spent a good two or three years there. I did some supercross stuff in between as I was going back and forth.

"The first two years were the biggest growing years of my life. I was 18 years old when I first went across to Europe and I slowly started to get into the swing of things. Equipment held me back for a little while and then I got a fill-in ride for Dixon Yamaha and my first opportunity on a factory bike. I went 3-3 for second overall on my first weekend on the Yamaha.

"It's been an up and down career, I have learned a lot and I have been to a lot of places and seen a lot of things. I am very blessed to be 24 years old and able to say that I can speak a couple of languages and that I've been around the world while getting paid to do it. My career is shaping up now where I feel I am coming into my own and I'm really looking forward to the future."

**DBR:** How does racing in Europe compare to racing the AMA Nationals?

**ML:** "It's funny because I've been a pro for five



years now and I've raced a lot of supercross but I've actually only raced two outdoor nationals and the two I did I raced with a broken hand. I'd say the tracks in the USA aren't as technical, they are a lot more wide open and it brings a different level of intensity to racing. But at the same time the intensity on the GP circuit has gone up over the last five years and I think people have started to realise that now. I think those guys in Europe are just as fast as our guys over here and I think the world really saw that for the first time this year."

**DBR:** You raced for a few brands in Europe including Husky, right?

**ML:** "In 2010 I rode with Bud Racing Kawasaki and in 2011 I rode for Ricci Racing Husqvarna and the next year I got the opportunity with Dixon Yamaha. After that I signed a two year contract with CLS Kawasaki which ended up going bad before it even started. At that point I kind of wrote Europe off as it was a lot of hard times and suffering."

**DBR:** I think you're the right person to ask this question as you've done it yourself but what

were your thoughts on RV's performance in the few GPs he did?

**ML:** "To be honest I was surprised he made the decision to go over. I've been there but RV is the best rider to swing a leg over a dirt bike in the last few years and many years before that. It's just a different world and you just can't explain it unless you've been there and done it and to be honest he did great. Those guys like Cairoli and Desalle and Febvre – who was a shock to everybody this year – are fast. It was cool for him to go over and see it but unfortunate the way that it played out as I'm sure with three of four more races he would have found his game and been right up there like he had been in Thailand."

**DBR:** What are your plans for 2016 and where are you going to be racing?

**ML:** "I've got a couple of deals in the works. Nothing is a done deal on paper just yet but we're getting close on a couple of things I'm working towards at the moment. Next year is put up or shut up for me and it's time for me to go make a break."

"I had the same feeling coming into this

previous season but I only made it to three races in before I had one of the worst injuries of my career. I was off the bike for a solid six or seven months. I've had some injuries in the past, but this one really put me down. It was a blessing in disguise though as I have been able to do a lot of things that I never saw myself doing and I've grown in a lot of ways that are only going to benefit me in the future."

**DBR:** So you say you had the worst injury of your career yet you also say it was a blessing in disguise. Tell us more about the opportunities that opened up for you – particularly with Canvas MX?

**ML:** "It's funny because building a career in something like Canvas was never a thought or desire for me. I personally didn't want ties in the business end of this industry but I like experiencing new things and at that point – during my time off – doing so meant experiencing something outside of racing. "If we back up to last November my family decided to get some all white gear which I raced the first three rounds of supercross with. That was only done to advertise me in a way >>



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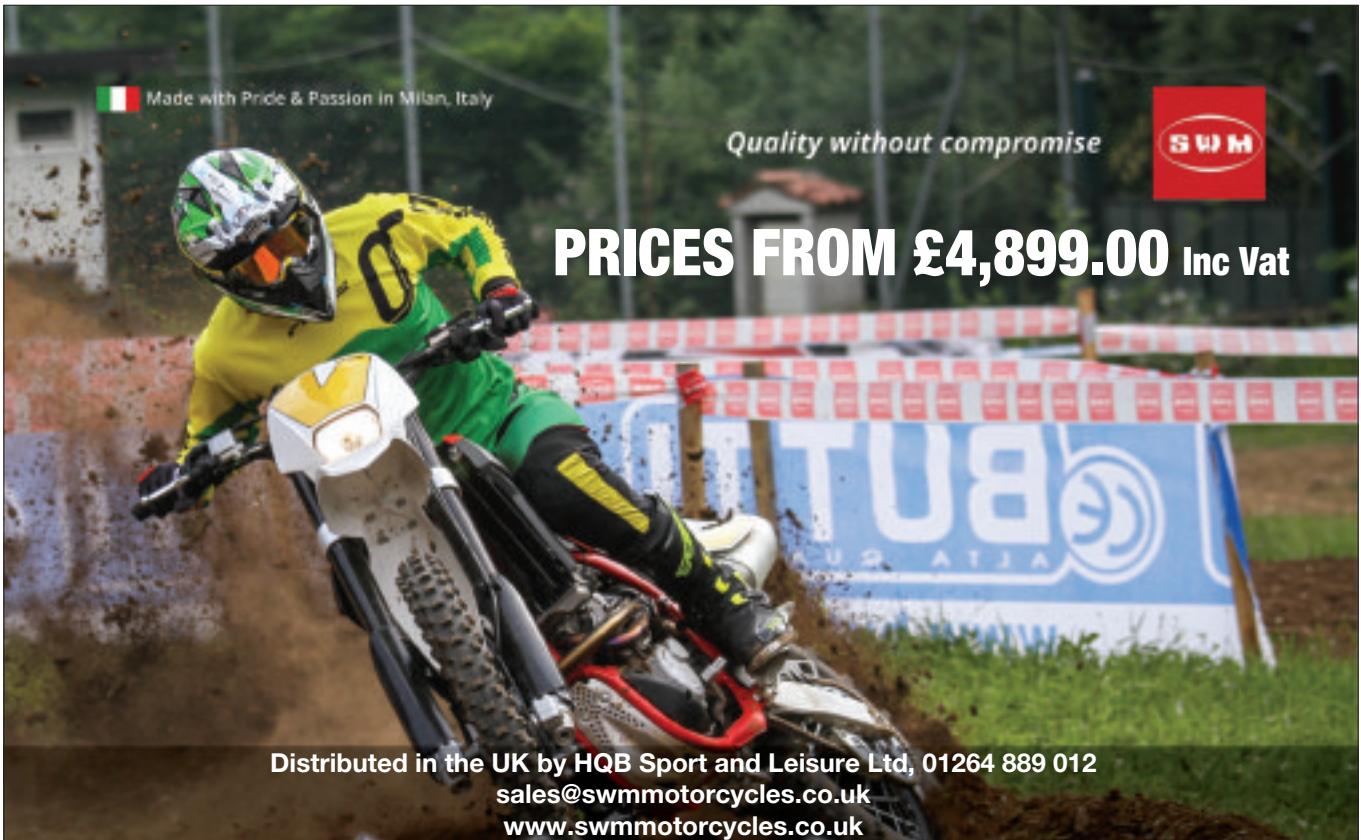


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that would give outside the industry companies a way to buy into our sport and to be able to put a big logo wherever they wanted, that was the goal of it.

"If you watch NASCAR they step out of their cars in an M&Ms suit or a Lowes suit or something like that and that speaks volumes. You don't know the make of the suits but that doesn't matter because they aren't paying the bills – M&Ms or Lowes are! In my opinion those type of guys needed more respect and I wanted to give that back as well as give me the opportunity to raise more capital to go racing the way that I do.

"Racing as a privateer guy is not cheap and I feel that as someone who has been knocking on the door of the top five I feel I have something to offer a company that wants to come in and get some extra exposure. That was the main goal of it. "A gear company in Argentina – called Radical – e-mailed me after I got hurt and literally three weeks later we had a plan in place and this is the outcome. For the next three or four months after that I learned accounting, importing, exporting and how to run a business and to be honest it's probably been the greatest thing I've ever done besides swinging a leg over a dirt bike.

"It's been great to expand my knowledge and further myself. I love progression whether it's with my racing, business or trading currencies which I also do. It's also another way for me to give back to the industry and give people a different option rather than supporting a traditional clothing brand where you are giving them free advertising – with Canvas MX you can advertise what you want. It puts the ball in your court whether you want to run the gear plain or support the people that are supporting you. All I can say is that it's been a great experience!" >>

*Being his own boss Michael can hit the track whenever he feels like it*



**DBR:** You say you like progression, so how do you see Canvas MX progressing in the next three to five years?

**ML:** "I see it doing a lot of big things and there is a lot of different stuff coming up. One thing we did off the bat was the Robbie Madison project. We made the gear for his Pipe Dream video. Talk about a first thing to go and do. That was huge for us and I'm blessed to be part of that.

"Then you have a guy like Nate Adams. Nate jumped on board from the get go. He helps me out with Deft and it's a similar scenario with me helping him with Canvas. He has always been a big inspiration in my career and he is somebody that has done amazing things in this sport. My relationship with him has opened up a lot of cool doors with people like Taka (Higashino) and Beau Bamburg and a few

others also coming on board.

"It's been great to give people an opportunity to do something a bit different and to be able to help people out a little. It's really opened up my eyes to how much more there is out there after racing."

**DBR:** Obviously you are still racing. It must be difficult to find the time to run a business and to train and ride too?

**ML:** "Training and riding/racing and running a business all at the same time is fun as I like to push myself. I definitely bite off more than I can chew once in a while but I do have people at the back end to help me out and things like that. I wake up at 5.30am, get on with it and get my training and riding in and if there is work to be done I get it done. Finding time for other stuff is tough but in the transition time finding

the right balance is what it's about."

**DBR:** We hear your mum is also a legend in the industry?

**ML:** "Yeah, my mum decided to home school me when I was in the 5th grade. She took it on to start with as it was too much to do homework, school and travel around the country when I was racing amateurs and it grew from there for her. It's just been a big family thing with mum and her On Track School business and dad with his Rocket Exhaust business. We basically built a team around that to go and race as a privateer for the last four or five years and it's great to say that I have been able to do that with my family. I guess you can say all three of us are entrepreneurs in a way and it's a big family bond and a big family connection."





Michael first wore the  
Canvas MX gear at last  
year's A1 season opener



Leib's time with Steve  
Dixon's Yamaha squad  
was short but fruitful

## THE QUICKIE QUICKFIRE QUESTION ROUND...

**DBR:** When you were a kid who was your all time motocross hero?

**ML:** "Kevin Windham, Mike LaRocco and Damon Bradshaw. Those guys were awesome. I have a set of Damon Bradshaw's gear from '98! Watching Kevin Windham ride a dirt bike – he was flawless."

**DBR:** So they are your favourites but who was the best to throw their leg over a dirt bike?

**ML:** "That's a tough one but I may have to say Travis Pastrana. For pure raw talent I'd have to say Pastrana."

**DBR:** And the best European rider?

**ML:** "It's got to be Stefan Everts or his old man!"

**DBR:** This might be an impossible question to answer but if you could take two riders from any era to race who would you pick?

**ML:** "David Bailey and Villopoto."

**DBR:** And who do you think would win?

**ML:** "That one's going have to be a mystery!"

**DBR:** Tell us something about Michael Leib that not many people know...

**ML:** "I can't start a day if my bed's not made! My day is wrecked if I don't make my bed when I get up!"

**DBR:** What do you like to do in your downtime?

**ML:** "What downtime? Snowboarding and being productive is what relaxes me. I also trade currencies which I quite like as it takes me away from racing."



# OUT WITH THE OLD...

DBR  
TESTED

TooFast Max says so long to his Husqvarna TC 125 – sniff...

Words and photos by Max Hind

**T**here's no stopping the inevitable and with a heavy heart I've had to hand back my beloved Husqvarna TC 125. But what a great time we've had together. I can truly look back on some seriously fond memories the old girl has given me – like the time we decided it would be a good idea to race against some 450s or when I lent her out to a British Youth Champion. Even the most regular of days at the track have given me memories to cherish and I can quite honestly say that this TC 125 has been one of the best bikes I've ever had the pleasure of riding.

I remember the day when Tom Gillingham from Husqvarna dropped her off. It was a cold evening in March. We immediately cracked on and started shooting our first TC 125 video and with lights and smoke bombs everywhere we definitely produced a 'different' video to start off the year!

After our first video and first ride we thought the next obvious step was to take the little 125 racing as a completely stock machine to see how she fared under race conditions straight out of the crate. Throwing the Husky (and myself) in at the deep end we actually ended up competing against a hoard of big 450s on a track with conditions that weren't the most favourable to the little smoker. Nevertheless our trusty TC 125 proved her worth and we were able to hold our own out there and have a damn good time too.

What's funny about the 'Motocross: 125cc vs. 450s – RACE!' video is that this GoPro clip of little old me racing around a not-so spectacular AMCA track at no-so spectacular speeds earned more views (225,000!) than our video of Max Anstie taking on the Bullet Jeffrey Herlings around the infamous Hawkstone Park! Insane! I guess that just proves the appeal of the TC 125 and the ever growing popularity of the two-stroke. I think we've all got a bit of two-stroke love in our hearts, don't we?

At this stage the Husky was still naked so to speak. I mean, we hadn't even dressed her

up in Go Faster stickers. So we had to change that immediately. The guys over at LR designs hooked us up with a sweet set of custom DBRified Husqvarna Chevron graphics. After that we could proudly roam about the pits knowing that we were riding the best looking girl in the paddock (all puns intended)...

Once our first race was completed we knew we had a solid bike to work and play with for the rest of the year. However in order to back up those opinions with facts we took the TC 125 over to Roland at Hardcore Racing to make use of his state of the art Dyno. By doing this we'd be able to determine the base numbers and figures that the stock machine put out before we went on to make our adjustments and improvements. As a completely stock machine the TC 125 threw out a huge reading of 38 BHP. Not bad for a little one twenty five eh?

So now we could confidently say that the TC 125 was born to rip and shred we set our sights on making a great bike even better. A combination of having those baseline figures as well as giving her a real field test in that first race meant that we knew exactly where we needed/wanted to make our adjustments.

Therefore we started with the simple stuff. We picked up the Husqvarna power parts brochure and handpicked the bits and pieces





we wanted straight off the bat – those items being a holeshot device and an oversized front disk to help in that ever important slowing down department.

The first thing we changed in terms of engine performance was due to a recommendation from our friends at Hardcore racing. They suggested that we try out a V Force 3 reed block, so we did just that. Immediately I could feel the difference it made to the performance. The bike felt as though it had far more throttle response in the lower rev range meaning that I found it a lot easier to huck big jumps straight out of tight corners.

In conjunction with these V Force reeds Hardcore also hooked us up with a HGS pipe system. This combination really did make a great bike even better. She became a little stronger throughout the rev range which in turn really did heighten my love for the Husqvarna.

Before we knew it the race season was drawing to a close and we thought it was time to unleash our transformed and tricked up machine on to the race track one more before the opportunity escaped us. However, we thought that the TC 125 deserved a bigger and better stage than her first outing in order to show us what she was really capable of. Therefore we gave the bike its big break and rolled her out, in only her second ever race voyage, into a national level event... gods be dammed if it were me behind the bars though!

Therefore we drafted the British Big Wheel 85cc Champion, Harry Kimber into the DBR test team for the weekend as he competed in his very first big bike race at the HCR Master Kids UK event on board our DBR TC 125. Harry soon adapted to my beloved steed, logged in a few solid results, and ultimately grew to love the bike himself. He now has a TC 125 of his own!

After a year of growing to love and cherish the Husqvarna TC 125 the time has come to let her go. Looking back in reflection I've now realised that the Husky has well and truly reinvigorated my love for riding dirt bikes. In recent years I either went riding or I didn't and I wasn't all that bothered but the TC 125 changed that.

For the first time in a long time I had that unrelenting urge to go out and ride, you know that feeling when you're just waiting for the weekend to roll around once again. This realisation hit me like an epiphany as I was driving home from the track one day and I thought to myself – 'I just can't wait to get out and that bike again.' I craved the feeling of ripping aboard the 125 and I truly missed it when I couldn't. It's safe to say that I'm in love with motocross again and I don't think I could write any better review for the 2015 Husqvarna TC 125 than that...

# ...IN WITH THE

Our new addition to the DBR test team (that's Dan Grove) gets his hands on his first ever brand-new bike (an RM-Z250)...

**S**o yeah, here it is, my very first DBR long-terminer – a Suzuki RM-Z 250. It's also my first ever new bike so it's safe to say it's a pretty exciting for me...

After racing second hand two strokes since the start of my riding days it's pretty weird and awesome to have a brand-new (at least it was on the morning of the DBR Mega Test a couple of months ago) and since then we've spent a fair few evenings discovering each other...

As with any bike I get my hands on I always wanna whip the swingarm and linkage out to make sure it's all greased up. It's all well and good getting your shock set up by a suspension specialist but if your linkage is knackered it won't make an awful lot of difference out on the track.

Unfortunately I didn't get to have the bike fresh from a showroom floor so it was in need of a good clean too but I like washing bikes so I didn't mind too much. The Suzuki had a decent amount of grease on all of the bearings but it wouldn't have lasted the season so I got to work working some grease into the needle bearings and the area between the two if

there was a gap. I basically worked greased in everywhere so that water couldn't get in and sit there rotting away after washing the bike, including the gap between the seal and bearing as this is a good spot for water to hide out. I did the same thing for the wheels and fired some grease between the wheel bearings and the seals and greased the axles as they were completely dry.

Next up I backed out the chain adjusting bolts to grease these up so that there's no danger of them getting seized up. I'll get round to greasing up the headstock by the time you have read this too...

You may think that as this bike isn't mine and that it'll be going back at the end of the year why don't I just ride it and ride it and ride it? Well, I still have to ride and race it and there is no fun involved when it comes to replacing any bearings on any type of bike, especially mid-season when you want to be riding and not cussing in the garage... Plus I want it to handle and perform the best it possibly can. A few hours and some greasing now will save much more time in the future...

The latest thing I've done to the RM-Z is an

Words and photos by **Dan Grove**

oil and oil filter change. Putoline Nano Tech replaced the standard oil which from reviews seems to be the oil to use. From now on I'll know exactly where I am when it comes to scheduling future changes.

One thing that I've never heard of is an oil strainer and this bike has two. These are basically additional oil filters to keep the gearbox and cam chain debris free. These both needed to be taken out and cleaned according to the manual after the running in period which it had just done and a bit more and I'm glad I did as they both had a small build up of metallic debris. This is all a bit new to me but the manual explains everything really well and I got it the job done relatively easily.

By the next issue I will have ridden the bike – I rode it at the mega test and loved it – so I can give some feedback on my journey to the four-stroke side and see how I get on with setting up the air forks too...



# NEW!

## DBR TESTED

Dan's first ride on the RM-Z



# Project

DEXTER DOUGLAS HAS BEEN GIVEN A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY BY HUSQVARNA AND THE RMJ ACADEMY AND WE'LL BE THERE EVERY STEP OF THE WAY TO TRACK THE PROJECT'S PROGRESS...

Words by Sean Lawless Photos by Immy Jones

**O**ne of Britain's brightest up-and-coming talents, Dexter Douglas has landed a supported ride with Husqvarna UK for 2016 through the RMJ Academy and every month we'll focus

on his progress.

The 16-year-old from Blackburn in Lancashire was the 2014 BYN BW85cc champion but last year was a tough one for him after a big crash sidelined him for a month-and-a-half and killed the early-season momentum he'd built up.

He'd quickly established himself as a front-runner in the MXY2 class and, racing against opponents up to three years older, had just scored his debut race podium finish in the ACU's flagship youth series when he crashed hard at round two in May.

"In the Maxxis MXY2 at the start of the year I was getting thirds and fourths but then I got injured at Canada Heights so I was out for something like six weeks," he says. "When I came back I didn't really ride as well as I know I'm capable of for the rest of the year."

The RMJ Academy Husqvarna ride has come about through his relationship with Richard-Mike Jones, a former British championship rider and highly-regarded trainer. Dexter's been with Rich-Mike since 2011 and the 31-year-old knows him inside out.

"He's got really good technique on the bike," reckons Rich-Mike, "and he did have quite good explosiveness – riding powerfully, pushing the boundaries – before he bruised his lungs when he crashed at Canada Heights and he's been lacking that since the injury. He was in hospital for a few days – it was quite bad."

Dexter ended the season nursing another injury – a broken wrist, the result of a practice crash in Germany – but as part of the RMJ Academy programme he's being closely monitored at Liverpool's John Moores University. Never one to miss a trick, Rich-Mike has turned a bad situation to his advantage...

"His lower body was lacking strength, that was the key point that came out of the tests with him at the university. Basically, his lower body wasn't strong enough.

"His arms were getting tired when he was riding but, actually, his upper body wasn't so bad. Essentially, he rode with his legs straight instead of working them because he didn't have enough power in them which meant he had to lean back and that worked his arms much harder."

While Dexter was unable to ride or train his upper body, Rich-Mike along with his university team of nutrition and fitness academics Steven Smith and Carl Langan-Jones used the time to work on his biggest weakness.

"He did lots of strength training on his legs and we've concentrated on turning a negative into a positive.

"When he first started riding again it was just out-and-out bike time and technique and now we'll start building in some endurance work and some sprints.

"He won't take long to get back where he was on a bike and he's had six weeks improving his lower body strength which, hopefully, has got him to where he needs to be. I reckon his stronger legs will show when he's been on the bike for a bit."

The RMJ Academy's most high-profile rider is Adam Sterry who's about to start his first full MX2 GP season but Rich-Mike already sees Dexter as a success story.

"He's one of my bigger achievements. The first two years coaching him were not very productive at all – then he came to me during the summer holidays for a boot camp and at the end of four weeks we went to a race at Canada Heights.

"He's always been very quiet and I just couldn't break through to him, couldn't get him to talk to me properly about how he was feeling on the bike.

"But at Canada Heights he pulled in after a race and I asked him how it felt expecting a simple 'okay' but he said that the first half he felt tight and then relaxed and got into a groove. I couldn't believe that he was finally giving me feedback and since then it's just clicked and we've gone from strength to strength. The year after we won the British Big-Wheel 85cc championship.

"Since he's started communicating the progression has rocketed and he's perfect for me to have on the RMJ Academy Husqvarna. Before his injury he broke into the top three in MXY2 and, don't forget, he was only 15 at the time racing against much older riders."

As for Dexter, he's heading into the new season brimming with confidence and – typically for

a Rich-Mike academy member is setting his sights high.

"It's brilliant to get the deal," adds Dexter. "I'm excited and optimistic and really looking forward to 2016. I want to qualify at the European 250s and hopefully score some points – and I want to win the Maxxis MXY2 championship!"

**DBR will be following Dexter and the RMJ Academy Husqvarna every month so stay tuned for monthly updates...**





*Say hello to our project – aka  
Dexter Douglas*

# THE NATURE



In less than three years Jack Bintcliffe has gone from absolute beginner to national champion with a string of international wins to his name...

Words Sean Lawless Photos by Nuno Laranjeira

# JRATI



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Jack's currently out in Spain testing for the new season



**I**f ever you needed proof that some riders are quite simply naturally talented then look no further than Jack Bintcliffe.

Last year's Michelin MX Nationals BW85cc champion and second in the EMX150 series, the 15-year-old from Harrogate in Yorkshire has only been riding for a little over three years. And, take note, that's riding, not racing.

Rangy, softly-spoken and – initially at least – definitely on the shy side, Jack's a product of the RMJ Academy with Rich-Mike Jones overseeing every step of his meteoric rise.

Unlike most of the riders he lines up against there's no family background in motocross but parents John and Paula are both hardcore racers, a passion they've passed on to their son.

"There's no history of motocross in my family," explains Jack over a bowl of

scrambled eggs at Liverpool's John Moores University where he undergoes regular fitness assessments with the RMJ Academy. "My dad and mum have been doing touring cars but no motocross."

'Doing' is an understatement. John is a bit of a BTCC legend who raced for Audi from 1996 to 1998, teaming up with champions Frank Biela and Yvan Muller. He twice finished seventh in the series with two wins to his name and Paula also raced cars to a very high standard – see what I mean about being hardcore?

"I watched a lot of motocross videos when I was younger and asked my mum for a bike but she felt it was too dangerous for me. When I was a bit older my mum finally got me one for Christmas and I was hooked."

"I got a KTM 65 and then I got a small-wheel and did a bit of enduro and then I went to

Finnley for the day and ever since then it's just been motocross."

It was immediately apparent that Jack was too big for a 65 so within a few weeks he upgraded to a SW85cc KTM and just a few weeks after that made his race debut.

It was an inauspicious start for a rider who just two years later would be rubbing shoulders with Tony Cairoli and Jeffrey Herlings in the Honda-only EMX150cc series that runs alongside the world championships

"I didn't win anything on the small-wheel – in fact I was always getting lapped in club races. Once I got involved with Rich-Mike I started to improve really, really quickly and I started to win club races."

"I was on a small-wheel and just doing club races when I met Rich-Mike. I was practising one day at FatCat and my bike wasn't working so we asked him to try one of his bikes. >>



"After that we got in touch and went for a one-to-one with him. At the time I couldn't even do a lap around FatCat – I had to ride on the practice track, I couldn't even use my back brake properly – and since then I've always been with him."

At this point Rich-Mike picks up the story...

"His first ever coaching day was at FatCat and he couldn't get round so we went on the start straight – we even had to get the cones out – and taught him how to brake standing up. He could use his back brake but only sitting down."

"Just under a year from that date he won his first national race on a big-wheel 85cc KTM. That was only his fifth or sixth national and before that his best result was maybe a ninth but he holeshot the race and won."

Instead of seeing his relative inexperience as a problem, Jack uses it as motivation.

"Most of the people I race have been doing it since Autos and that just makes me want to try harder," Jack admits. "I've caught up now and have started passing them which is a great feeling."

Jack's been turning some famous heads over the last 18 months, most notably three-time world 500cc champion Dave Thorpe who signed him to Honda UK's rookie programme for 2015.

An invitation to contest the Euro 150cc series followed and he excelled, winning races in Italy, Britain and Czech plus the overall in Belgium with a 1-1 card. Going into the final round in Holland in August he was just two points adrift of rising Finnish star Emil Weckman but came up just short.

"I got second overall in the EMX150 championship. It went down to the last round but I went off the track in the whoops in the

second race and crashed. From 16 seconds behind I got it back to eight-tenths going over the finish line so it was pretty close."

"I was very disappointed not to win it last year – I can't really put the feeling into words – but that's made me all the more determined to come back even stronger in 2016."

"I'm lucky that I had Rich-Mike with me and Gordon Crockard. I spent most of my time with Rich-Mike but I did go on the track walk with Gordon at the last round."

"I'm a quick learner and a good listener so I always take in what Rich-Mike says."

Jack's about to begin his second season with the Honda UK rookie team and has moved up to a 250F to contest the EMX250 championship and the ACU MXY2 series.

"It's going to be really hard to qualify in EMX250 – that's my main goal – and it would be great to score some points. In the MXY2 championship I definitely want to be in the top three or the top five and get some podiums and even win some."

Looking a little further into the future, Jack's got his heart set on turning professional and he's set his sights high.

"I definitely see motocross as a career –

it means everything to me. I want to be world champion. I'd like to go to America to try to win as well. I've got very big ambitions."

"Motocross is everything. The feeling you get from riding – even if it's just mucking about and not racing – is the best."



## Rich-Mike Jones... ...on Jack Bintcliffe

"Jack is definitely a potential world champion. They're a racing family through and through and for me, having worked with a lot of talented athletes, one of the biggest things going for them is that the whole family lives for racing. There's no need to try and balance things out because everyone wants to go racing."

"It's a big, big help. There's never been any holding back from John or Paula in terms of saying what they're in this for. If they're in it then they're in it to win it. For that reason for me they're a joy to work with."

"For instance they're home-schooling him. There seems to be a negative attitude that if you don't do it the way everyone else does it you're frowned upon. They're not worried about that – they just want to give Jack the best opportunity to make this his career."

"They want to make him world champion and if he's got a shot they want to give him every opportunity."

## Dave Thorpe... ...on Jack Bintcliffe

"Jack's riding for the Honda UK rookie team – I try and co-ordinate it for Honda UK, it's a way of identifying young talent who we can try and nurture. Obviously Jack did very well last year in the 150 class and we're pleased to have him as part of the rookie programme."

"He was in the programme last year, albeit on a 150 – everyone else in the rookie team last year was on a 250 – but this year he's obviously moved up a class."

"In August 2014 I was at FatCat with the Red Bull Academy and was working with the boys when I spotted this #11 riding and he really caught my eye. Because I was doing the Red Bull day I kind of lost sight of him and on my way home I remember thinking that I never found out who that #11 kid was and it kind of passed me by."

"And then in September we did the dealer test days where we try and encourage potential rookie riders to come and have a try-out so we can see them. We were at a track at Newcastle and as I walked down to watch the first group go out this #11 rider went past me and I thought 'oh wow, he's here' and I watched him again."

"He was riding on sand when I first saw him and this time around the track was relatively hard so I knew he could do both. I followed him when he went back to his van and just started chatting to his mum. The whole story unfolded with the limited time Jack had been riding and that they'd come to try the 150 and being a Honda person I was keen to get him on one."

"He rode it really well, got invited to the 150 Cup and the rest is history really."

"Not to put any pressure on Jack – he puts enough on himself because he likes to succeed – but I see him with huge amounts of potential. The thing I like about Jack is he's a really nice lad. He speaks to you really well, he's got a good, solid family around him and I think there are not many kids in the UK who really turn my head but Jack does."

"There's definitely something there and given a lot of hard work and a good roll of the dice I don't see why he can't do really well."



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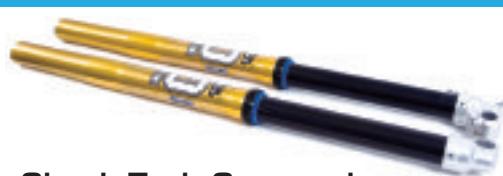
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# NATIONAL TREASURE

ALL-NEW MCF SERIES READY TO ROCK IN 2016...

In the hands of Claudio Bernardinelli and his LS Promotions team MCF National titles are once again up for grabs in 2016. The all new MX Premier Cup will have Judd Racing as the headline sponsor when the action kicks off at Mildenhall March 5/6.

All the youth classes are covered and for the very first time MCF Auto champions will be crowned. Not one, but two, as the 50cc gang are split into under 7 and under 8 age groups as registered on Jan 1.

In the 65s with a gaggle of last year's 50cc fliers upgraded – including Riley Keene, Ellis Poole and Louis Vincent – section favourites Ollie Colmer and Kyle Ingram will go up against the likes of Arai Elcock and Charlie Reynolds which should prove a tasty affair.

In the 85s Bobby Bruce will be flat out for the Small Wheel crown, Louie Kessell will be in the mix at selected events as over in the Big Wheels Sam Price can look forward to crossing swords with Calum Mitchell and when not on Euro duty Eddie

Jay Wade too. Dane Reeves will be another looking to go well in the Biggies as Kieron Cooke heads the list of favourites for the MX2 title. From an early list of entries it could be the likes of Tom Hume, Jake Curtis Stevens and Joe Eiffort challenging for MX2 podium positions fully tested by section newcomers in the shape of Jake Winnard, Nathan Claughton, Danny Rapson and Kurtis Griffiths. Adding much spice to the 2016 series, overseas riders representing Spain, Ireland and another team made up of Dutch and Belgian riders flying the EHR Flag will also be present at some rounds.

"After the relative disappointments of 2015 I'm so glad to be now running under MCF rules with the backing and expertise they offer," says series promoter Claudio Bernardinelli. "Roy Barton in particular has been absolutely brilliant with advice and support, also providing additional infrastructure as used in the Pro Nationals series. I'm aiming to wow everyone when they arrive at Mildenhall for round one."

Taking a closer look at the twist and go 50cc

Autos, under MCF rules 44 will line up and it's already stacked out. Two of the younger stars from last years Route 77 (age 6-7) series, Harry Thickett and Kai Thorpe, are sure to figure prominently in 2016 as will Neo McCartney. In last years Route 77 championship it was Harry T who emerged as champion, impressively winning six of seven heat victories in the second half of the season. Taking two heat wins backed up with a host of podium finishes Kai Thorpe ended the year in series third with consistent Neo McCartney fourth.

## HOT DATES

### Judd Racing MX Premier Cup

Round 1	Mildenhall	March 5/6
Round 2	Preston Docks	April 16/17
Round 3	Landrake	May 7/8
Round 4	FatCat	May 21/22
Round 5	Pontrilas	June 18/19
Round 6	TBA	July 30/31
Round 7	Culham	August 13/14

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As championship chases go, the 2015 Thor British Youth National Big Wheel shootout was just about as tense and competitive as it gets. While Harry Kimber proved the ultimate winner a grand total of 10 different individual heat winners emerged and one of those terrific 10 was northern sand specialist Sam Price.

Sam claimed his first ever national win at the Haverigg series opener with victory number two coming at the penultimate Desertmartin round. A mid-season injury meant one BYN round was missed and that same injury also cost him the Route 77 title and what would have been a final round showdown for the Pirelli Masters crown. Missing out on a possible national double was a bitter pill but right at the end of the year a glorious debut win on Weston Beach made some amends.

Wondering just what's been happening since Weston, what's in the pipeline for 2016 and his thoughts on 2015, Rage cornered Pricey for a word.

**Rage:** It was a great end to the season for you winning at Weston. What have you been up to most recently? And are you sticking with 85s in 2016?

**SP:** "After Weston I hooked up with my new trainer, Danny Tollet (NMA) and things are shaping really well. We've been out in Tenerife practising, enjoying the sunshine and I've even gained a new sponsor out there – Moto/Star

Bike Hire. And, yeah it's definitely Big Wheels again in 2016."

**Rage:** What competitions have you entered?

**SP:** "I've signed up for the big four home based National series – the British Youth Nationals, MX Nationals, Pirelli Masters and the new MCF National Championship run by LS Promotions."

**Rage:** In 2015 having raced in three National series – Route 77, Pirelli Masters and British Youth Nationals – how do you rate and compare the different championships?

**SP:** "With the British Youth Nationals being the biggest/most important series for youth that was defiantly the best run and the most competitive championship of the year. The Pirelli Masters was also a great championship with great tracks but the competition wasn't as intense because there wasn't as many national riders there. The Route 77 championship was far more relaxed but still a very good series.

Mid-season injury meant I missed the Route 77 Hilton Park round but I won every other round. In the Pirelli Masters I won overall at Foxhill, finished runner-up at Hawkstone and third at Whitby."

**Rage:** On the subject of racing format at Nationals do you think British Youth Nationals in particular have it right? What would be your preferred format?

**SP:** "Personally I think a total of six races over a

weekend would be the best amount. Qualifying and three heats on Saturday and three races with five minutes free practice session on Sunday."

**Rage:** Did you find winning Weston at your first attempt easier than expected?

**SP:** "Not having any experience and not knowing much about it made preparing for the race tough for me, my dad, and my granddad. I found the race easier than expected because I didn't think my fitness would be able to last that long. As it turned out the track wasn't as tough as I expected and was only about as rough as a normal track at a national meeting. I think it was because the track was so long and so wide. It was a great experience for me and my dad and was also the best feeling coming past the pit area to see my dad waving the pit board with a #1 written on it. I've definitely got the beach race bug now and I can't wait to do it again on the 125 later this year."

**Rage:** Thanks for all that Sam who do you need to thank?

**SP:** "Really like to thank 7T Race Engines for all the great work in 2015/16. Also like to thank SPS Barnsley for the 2015 help. In the second half of 2015 I ran Planet Suspension and it will be the same in 2016 so a big thanks to them. And of course massive thanks to my family, all the other sponsors, and new trainer Danny Tollet – I couldn't do it without all you guys."

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# MADCHESTER!

THE ARENACROSS TOUR KICKS OFF IN MANCHESTER AND IT'S A RIGHT ROWDY AFFAIR...

In front of a noisy sell out Manchester Arena crowd, the 2016 Monster Energy Arenacross Tour powered by Ford Ranger kicked off and it was a real blast!

Claiming the overall win in the 65s was nine year old Kian Boughen. Although consistently laying down fastest laps in practice, Kian had to power his way through the pack in the final. Skillfully taking the lead, he then controlled the pace for a great crowd pleasing win as Ollie Colmer made second. In the earlier points scoring race, Kian once again fought his way to the front but a fall dropped him back to second, as Colmer scooped the win. At the end of the night with both boys tied on points, Colmer had to settle for podium second while Tyler Etheridge successfully kept the pack at bay to claim third overall.

In the 85cc Superminis Kacey Hird absolutely smashed it in race one. Reigning champion Harry Kimber was a bit annoyed with himself only making second but there were no mistakes

in race two though as he totally bossed it to claim the overall win. At the flag behind Kimber, Ben Burridge was next across the line as hard charging second row starter Kurt Griffiths made third. For his overall efforts going 3-2 on the RV Racing Suzuki Burridge claimed the runner up prize as Hird took podium third with a 1-6 scorecard. Hird's Team Green team buddy Lewis Hall finished the evening in championship fourth. It was an opening round of thrills and spills for him, plenty of speed and determination though, and that could prove a winner on another night.

With just six Pro Lite riders in the fray, it was Joe Clayton who dominated proceedings. Clayton was quickest in both qualification sessions with George Clarke as his main challenge. And it was the very same picture in both points scoring motos and Clayton exited Manchester with both wins. For Clarke a brace of runner-up finishes netted him second overall while Jordan Moxey took a pair of thirds for the final step on the podium.



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## ARE YOU READY TO RUMBLE?

We'll have the start of the 2016 race season in next month's mag with the opening round of the AMA Supercross series from Anaheim which is looking like it might be a bit of a mudder. We'll also have an awesome mix of exclusive interviews, a bike test or two and some other stuff which we can't remember right now. Whatever, it's gonna be a right riveting read so join us on February 12 for a real Valentine's weekend treat..

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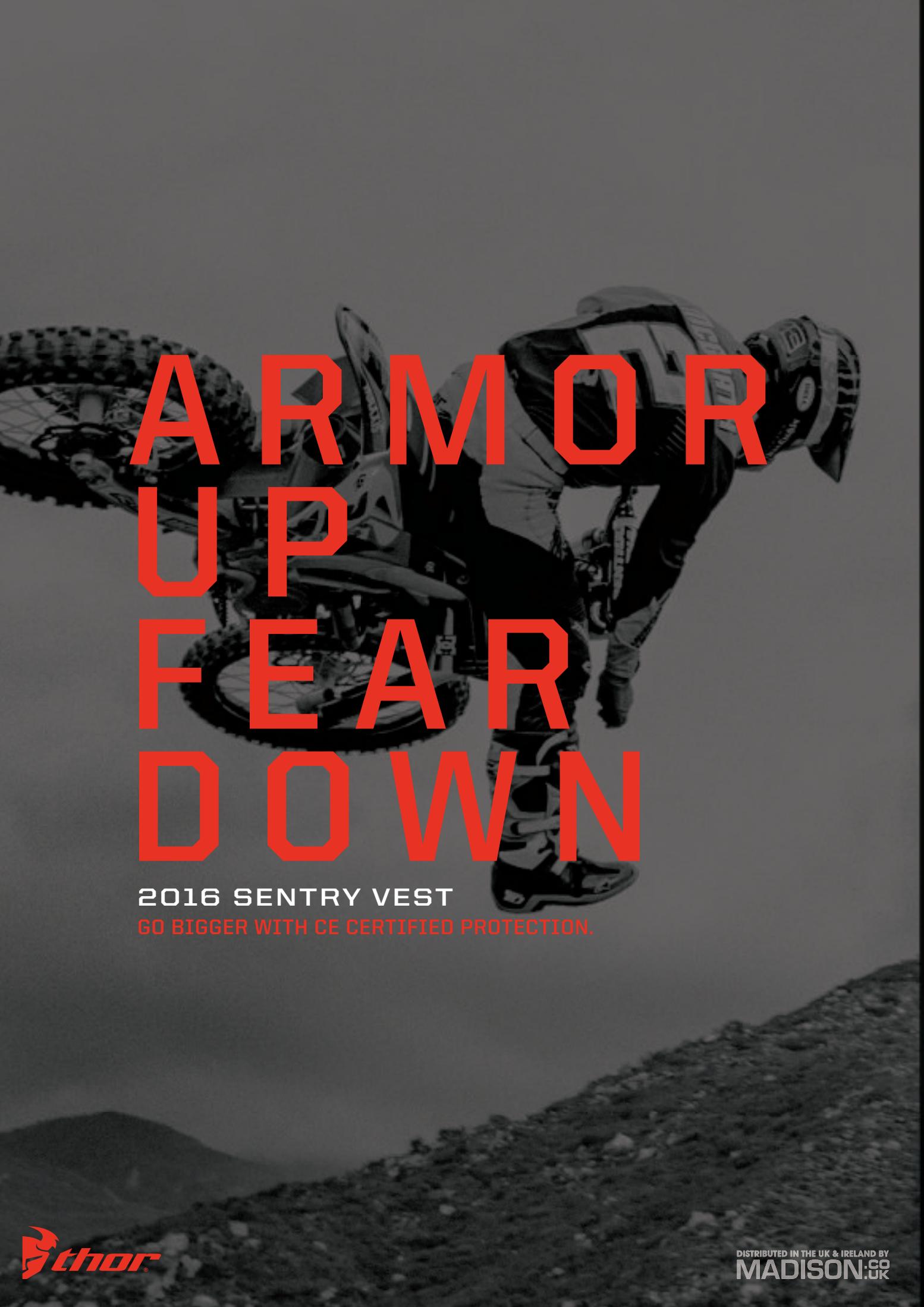
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